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# GENDER ASSESSMENT FOR USAID/LEBANON

July 2012

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JULY 2012

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## ACRONYMS

BALADI	Building Alliances for Local Advancement, Development and Investment
CDCS	Country Development Cooperation Strategy
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Kinds of Discrimination against Women
CERD	Center for Education Research and Development
CSO	Civil Society Organization
CTA/PVS	Counter Terrorism Act and Partner Vetting System
D-RASATI	Developing Rehabilitation Assistance to Schools and Teachers Improvement
DO	Development Objective
ERF	Economic Research Forum
EC	European Commission
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization
GEWAMED	Mainstreaming Gender Dimensions into Water Resources Development and Management in the Mediterranean Region
GFP	Gender Focal Point
GWA	Gender and Water Alliance
IFC	International Financial Corporation
IFES	International Foundation for Electoral Systems
ILO	International Labour Office
IP	Implementing Partner
IR	Intermediate Result
IWRM	Integrated Water Resource Management
KAFA	Enough (Violence and Exploitation)
LCCs	Local Community Committees
LIM	Lebanon Investment in Micro Finance
LU	Lebanese University
LWWSS	Lebanon Water and Wastewater Sector Support
MEHE	Ministry of Education and Higher Education
MEW	Lebanese Ministry of Energy and Water
MOSA	Ministry of Social Affairs
MSME	Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises
NCLW	National Commission for Lebanese Women
NDI	National Democratic Institute
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NOWARA	National Observatory for Women in Agriculture and Rural Areas
ONILFA	Osservatorio Nazionale per l'impreditoria e il Lavoro Femminile in Agricoltura
PMPL	Performance Management Program for Lebanon
RFA	Request for Application
RMF	Rene Mouawad Foundation
SI	Social Impact
SWMENA	Status of Women in the Middle East and North Africa
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme

UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Funds
UNIFEM	United Nations Development Fund for Women
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
USAP	University Student Assistance Program
VCD	Value Chain Development
VTE	Vocational and Technical Education



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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report presents the findings of a gender assessment in Lebanon conducted by two independent consultants on behalf of the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) Mission for Lebanon as part of the preparation of its new Country Development Cooperation Strategy (CDCS). The CDCS reflects two preliminary Development Objectives (DOs): (1) Improved capacity of the public sector in providing transparent, quality services across Lebanon; and (2) Enhanced economic opportunity for the poorest segments of Lebanese society, particularly in areas outside metro Beirut. The assessment provides an analysis of gender priorities and gaps in programming areas corresponding to the seven different Intermediate Results (IRs) associated with each of the DOs. It also advances a set of interventions that would facilitate reaching these IRs with effectiveness and efficiency.

A contextual analysis of Lebanon's salient features points to complex political and socio-economic dynamics that continue to undermine gender equality and female empowerment in the country. Despite their seemingly favorable position and notwithstanding some recent gains, Lebanese women face discrimination at many levels rooted in persistent regressive laws and regulations, deeply patriarchal cultural values, inadequate public policies, lack of political will for social change, and a sectarian system that keeps women's issues within the realm of the religious establishments. Women's conditions in Lebanon are further aggravated by increasing economic disparities, ongoing conflict and security problems, and a rise in social conservatism. Nevertheless, the prospects of USAID to contribute effectively to the elimination of gender discrimination in Lebanon are quite positive and may be facilitated by many factors. For one, Lebanon enjoys an active civil society, high female literacy rates, and an open social environment armed with a constitutional democracy based (at least in principle) on freedom of expression and equality between men and women - together these factors provide for solid opportunities to promote change in Lebanon in line with the tenets of USAID's Gender Equality and Female Empowerment Policy. Moreover, USAID already has a large portfolio of projects that cover a wide range of issues critical to the development of the Lebanese economy and the well being of the society as a whole. As such, it has a solid platform for gender mainstreaming.

The assessment in the report proposes interventions (many of which could be implemented as part of current USAID projects) that aim to affect improvement in mentalities, in representations, in values, in laws, and in conditions that could ultimately lead to equality for all, men and women, boys and girls. In a nutshell, these interventions focus on capacity building, knowledge sharing, networking, advocacy, access to resources, awareness campaigns, research and data collection, institutional development, and lobbying for legal reforms, among many. They cover gaps in the educational system, governance and service delivery, rural development and water services, productivity of micro and small enterprises, and the capacities of civil society. But the success of these interventions depends largely on structural gender mainstreaming in all stages of design, planning, implementation, and evaluation of program activities, including within the organizational structure of the USAID office. Most importantly, it requires active partnerships and collaboration with all relevant stakeholders, including state institutions, the private sector, the media, civil society, women's machinery, and the wider international development community operating in Lebanon.

# **I. INTRODUCTION**

## **BACKGROUND AND OBJECTIVES**

This report presents the findings of a gender assessment in Lebanon conducted by two independent consultants on behalf of the United States Agency for International Development Mission for Lebanon (USAID/Lebanon hereafter) under the supervision of Social Impact, a USAID/Lebanon Implementing Partner (IP) of the Performance Management Program for Lebanon (PMPL) project. It was completed over a period of two months (between April and June 2012) as part of the preparation of USAID/Lebanon's new Country Development Cooperation Strategy (CDCS).

Apart from the formal USAID policy requirement that the development of the CDCS must be informed by a gender analysis, the present assessment contributes to the stated goal of USAID/Lebanon geared towards "Improved accountability and credibility of public institutions and broader economic prosperity," which would ultimately lead to the well-being both of men and of women in Lebanon. To this end, the main aims of the assessment are to (1) analyze the key gender inequalities in the country; (2) identify the main constraints and opportunities for equitable participation of men and women (of all ages) in key USAID program areas; and (3) provide recommendations for mechanisms conducive to gender mainstreaming in USAID-supported projects in Lebanon. Some ideas for possible interventions will also be advanced to help meet the two preliminary Development Objectives (DOs) of the new CDCS, stipulated at this preparatory stage as follows: (1) Improved capacity of the public sector in providing transparent, quality services across Lebanon and (2) Enhanced economic opportunity for the poorest segments of Lebanese society, particularly in areas outside metro Beirut. The specifics of each of these two DOs will be articulated through a set of seven Intermediate Results (IRs) to be achieved in the process of program development and implementation.

While this assessment does not particularly evaluate USAID-supported projects and their outcomes, it is presumed that it will nevertheless help reaching these IRs with greater effectiveness and efficiency. Ultimately, it is also expected that the in-depth exploration to be completed in this assessment of the centrality of gender relations to the socioeconomic, cultural, and political structures in Lebanon will contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of the environment within which USAID development assistance operates.

## **ASSESSMENT METHODOLOGY AND FRAME OF REFERENCE**

This assessment addresses both cause and effect, each in terms of their relations with the issues in question. A focus on cause necessitates an examination of the contextual structure surrounding women and gender relations in Lebanon, while a focus on effects requires an exploration of their actual conditions and status. To this end, the methodology adopted here situates the main topic within multiple interactive settings, each of which is thoroughly examined: the overall socio-political and cultural attributes of the Lebanese society; the state of development and its trajectory in Lebanon; and the official institutional and legal structures in the country. The premise of this three-pronged examination is that these settings (a) are intricately connected, and (b) have all shaped, for better or for worse, women's rights and gender

relations. It should be noted, however, that the purpose here is not to provide an exhaustive analysis of any of the settings. It is rather an attempt to identify within each of them the elements that may (positively or negatively) affect women's empowerment and gender equality, and come up with relevant recommendations to address these issues within current and future USAID/Lebanon programs.

The frame of reference of the assessment is guided by criteria set forth in the Scope of Work (Annex 3). Conceptually, it is informed by the main international instruments related to human rights, gender equality, and women's issues, including the Beijing Declaration and its Plan of Action, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), and the Plan of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD). It also reflects the principles of the newly updated “Policy of USAID on Gender Equality and Female Empowerment” designed to enhance women's empowerment and reduce gender gaps. Clearly the work of USAID in Lebanon and its Development Objectives (as spelled out in both the current country strategy and the new CDCS) correspond directly to the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), primarily to Goals 1, 2, 7, and 8 (dealing respectively with poverty and hunger, primary education, environmental sustainability, and global partnership for development). But the different layers of the seven Intermediate Results, which articulate each of the DOs, also cut across most of the other goals embedded in the Millennium Declaration, but especially Goal 3 focused on gender equality and women's empowerment. Both research and practice have confirmed that neither poverty reduction nor good governance (the two underlying elements in the DOs of USAID/Lebanon) may be achieved without addressing issues specific to gender relations and to women of all ages. In fact, as in the Beijing Platform of Action, the MDGs recognize the vital link between development and gender, that action is needed on all levels (national, regional, international), and that all stakeholders (governments, private sector, international agencies, civil society) must be enlisted in order to achieve overall development goals. Finally, in conducting the assessment, the analysis utilized established gender related analytical tools, including USAID Guide to Gender Integration and Analysis and its standard definitions of key concepts such as “gender mainstreaming” “gender equality”, and “female empowerment.”

**Box I**  
**Aims of USAID Gender Policy**

- Reduce gender disparities in access to, control over and benefit from resources, wealth, opportunities and services - economic, social, political, and cultural;
- Reduce gender-based violence and mitigate its harmful effects on individuals and communities; and
- Increase capability of women and girls to realize their rights, determine their life outcomes, and influence decision-making in households, communities, and societies.

**Source: USAID GENDER EQUALITY AND  
FEMALE EMPOWERMENT POLICY, March  
2012**

## **ASSESSMENT EVIDENCE BASE AND METHODOLOGICAL LIMITATIONS**

The assessment draws on multiple sources, triangulating among different information sources, including the following:

- Desk review of USAID related documentation and selective core records, including project documents, program evaluations, and policy-related documents. (Please see Annex 1)

- Comprehensive literature review of all relevant thematic subjects, covering academic studies, UN documents, available statistics on Lebanon, and publications of various international development organizations (Please see Annex 1).
- Review of related public policies and regulations, including Lebanon's CEDAW reports.
- Semi-structured interviews<sup>1</sup> with relevant stakeholders from the government, UN organizations, civil society organizations (CSOs), women's rights machinery, USAID/ Lebanon staff, and the IP of the (PMPL) project<sup>2</sup> (Please see Annex 2 for full list).

Notwithstanding the openness and accessibility of all consulted stakeholders, the main constraint on this assessment exercise was its tight schedule and short duration. This affected the ability of the team to have access to all necessary resources including interviewing women themselves as beneficiaries of development programs, and to all the relevant informants in due time.

## OUTLINE OF THE REPORT

This report includes 5 sections. This first section sets the stage for the assessment and describes its purpose, approach, rationale of the methodology, the main methodological limitations, and conceptual frame of reference - all in the context of USAID's overall strategic objectives in Lebanon.

Section 2 situates Lebanese women's status and gender issues in the socio-economic and political dynamics of their country. It includes an overview of the salient features of Lebanon, especially in their relevance to gender equality and female empowerment. The bulk of the analysis deconstructs the dynamics and effects of three different structural areas that continue to contribute to the institutionalization of gender inequality and women's subordination, namely (1) legal and constitutional frameworks, (2) political participation and decision making, and (3) public policies and development strategies. This section also includes a brief account of the women's machinery in Lebanon at both official and societal levels with a view of identifying potential partners for USAID/ Lebanon in its future gender-related programming.

Section 3 provides an analysis of the priorities, constraints, and recommendations for each of the Intermediate Results associated with the preliminary Development Objectives identified in the new CDCS for Lebanon. Section 4 shifts the focus of the assessment exercise to the programming and implementation structures of USAID/Lebanon. It draws on information collected during interviews with the Mission's program staff and Implementing Partners (IPs) and on examination of current projects to advance suggestions geared towards gender mainstreaming in the particular context of the Mission. Section 5 provides concluding remarks with a recap of the main findings.

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<sup>1</sup> Depending on their focus of work, the interviews covered the overall programs of the interviewees and the place of gender issues in their formulation, development, and implementation. They also clarified criteria used in measuring progress towards meeting stated objectives, the profile of their staff in terms of any gender-related expertise and knowledge of gender-related tools, and their perceptions of women's conditions and empowerment prospects in Lebanon.

<sup>2</sup> The decision to interview this specific IP was based on the nature of its project and its immediate relevance to the implementation of USAID gender policy and to gender mainstreaming in the overall program of USAID/Lebanon.

## II. NATIONAL CONTEXT AND POLICY FRAMEWORK - A GENDER PERSPECTIVE

Despite their seemingly favorable positions, Lebanese women continue to lag behind in many aspects of their social, economic, and political rights. Superficially, they project an image of liberation, accomplishment, and independence. At a deeper level, their lives are marked by much vulnerability rooted in persistent regressive laws and regulations, deeply patriarchal cultural values, and inadequate public policies and political systems.

Box 2 - Gender Statistics, Lebanon	2010
Children out of school, primary, female	15275
Children out of school, primary, male	14572
Expected years of schooling, female	14
Female legislators, senior officials and managers (% of total)	8
Labor force participation rate, female (% of female population ages 15-64)	25
Labor force, female (% of total labor force)	26
Literacy rate, adult female (% of females ages 15 and above)	86
Number of weeks of maternity leave	7
Population, total	4227000
Population, female	2163000
Proportion of women in ministerial level positions (%)	0
Proportion of seats held by women in national parliaments (%)	3
Adolescent fertility rate (births per 1,000 women ages 15-19)	16
Literacy rate, adult male (% of males ages 15 and above)	93
Ratio of female to male primary enrollment (%)	97
Ratio of female to male secondary enrollment (%)	112
Ratio of female to male tertiary enrollment (%)	119
Labor force participation rate, male (% of male population ages 15-64)	75
Labor force, total	1453155
Maternal leave benefits (% of wages paid in covered period)	100
Ratio of female to male labor force participation rate	32
Unemployment, total (% of total labor force)	9
Wage and salaried workers, female (% of females employed)	82
Wage and salary workers, male (% of males employed)	56
<b>Source: Constructed by the author based on World Bank figures (World Data Bank - Gender Statistics)</b> Figures in Italics are for 2007	

At many levels, *the inconsistent conditions of women in Lebanon are a reflection of their own country's contradictory political and social features*. With an estimated population of about 4,200,000 (UN 2008 figures), Lebanon is endowed with rich human capital, a strategically-positioned geographic location, and an open social and economic environment supported by a parliamentary democracy and a constitutional commitment to civil rights and freedom. On the other hand, a much celebrated rich cultural heritage and ethno-religious diversity have imposed on the country the formidable task of accommodating the political (and often conflicting) claims of 18 officially recognized sects. A power-

### **Box 3**

#### **Sex versus Gender**

*Sex* refers to the biological and physiological characteristics that define men and women.

*Gender* refers to the socially constructed roles, behaviors, activities, and attributes that a given society considers appropriate for men and women.

Aspects of sex will not vary substantially between different human societies, while aspects of gender may vary greatly.

**Source:** World Health Organization Definitions

sharing formula drawn along sectarian lines and rooted in traditional loyalties has restricted the possibility of a solid unified sense of citizenship and plagued the country into repeated cycles of violence. Moreover, an economic system based on minimal taxation and an utmost commitment to free market has privileged the private sector according it much dominance over most vital public services, including education<sup>3</sup> and health.<sup>4</sup> In this context, the weakness of the State is especially felt in the areas of civil affairs and personal status (especially in their relevance to women's civic rights, family matters and gender relations). Such affairs have been formally relegated to the religious authorities as part of a confessional system rooted in a fundamental acknowledgement of the representational rights of registered sects and their respective power over their subjects.

Women by definition have been a primary victim to such volatile and problematic national dynamics. What follows is

an elaboration of the structural areas in the Lebanese context that incorporate the main obstacles to gender equality and female empowerment.

## **LEGAL AND CONSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORKS**

Lebanon is a democracy and the people of the Republic are the source of authority through their elected representatives. *The Lebanese Constitution, promulgated in 1926, upholds the code of equality among all citizens and does not in principle carry any discrimination against women*. In fact, Article 7 of the Constitution clearly states that all Lebanese are equal before the law, enjoy equal civil and political rights, and bear equal obligations and duties without any differences between them. Moreover, according to Article 12 every Lebanese has the right to hold public office, without any preferences except for merit and capacities. The Constitution also guarantees all Lebanese citizens a set of fundamental liberties, primary

<sup>3</sup> According to an ERF study, "the public sector accommodates 37% of students enrolled in the Lebanese educational system and education as a whole is controlled mostly by private institutions" (Nahhas, 2009).

<sup>4</sup> Based on WHO figures, "more than 80% of health service delivery is provided by the private sector. The private sector has grown in an unregulated mode in the last three decades generating a supplier induced demand. The system lacks a gatekeeper and referral mechanisms." (WHO, 2008).



among them is political participation, personal freedoms, access to employment, and freedom of expression.

On the other hand, *the Constitution carries in its commitment to freedom of religious expression and to sectarian multiplicity the seeds for gender discrimination*. For instance, Articles 9 and 10 of the Constitution guarantee Lebanese families the right to exercise spiritual independence and the ability to manage familial affairs based on own religious beliefs and requirements. By keeping family matters -- with the family being typically a primary space for the development of gender and power relations -- within the jurisdictions of religious courts, the Lebanese Constitution detaches itself from its role as a guarantor of equal rights and creates a buffer between the citizen and the State. This is accentuated by the fact that most religious laws treat women as a weaker member of the family and deprives them of equal sharing in the power structures, especially on issues related to marriage, custody, divorce, and inheritance. Furthermore, such Constitutional provisions undermine the possibility of unity among Lebanese communities, but especially among women whose personal status rights are spread over different court systems depending on their respective sectarian affiliations. Demands and pressures from Civil Society Organizations to establish a unified secular personal status system of laws (that would be by definition outside the realm of sectarian divisions and more supportive of gender equality) have faced adamant resistance from the religious establishments in the country.

Notwithstanding *considerable positive changes in recent years in favor of women's rights on issues related to Labour Code, the Social Security Code, and state employment regulations*,<sup>5</sup> gender relations in Lebanon continue to be marked by flagrant inequalities in other legal areas besides the personal status laws. A notable case is the Nationality Law Act No. 15, which restricts to men the right to pass on citizenship status to children and spouses when married to a foreign national. By depriving women of this right, the Lebanese State fails to live up to its own declared commitment (as specified in the Constitution) to full and unconditional equality between all citizens. It also leaves thousands of families and children in Lebanon in a state of legal vulnerability and deprived of often much-needed benefits and entitlements. Furthermore, the Lebanese system continues to lack any legislation concerning the crime of trafficking in persons and sexual exploitation. Domestic violence and Gender-Based Violence (GBV) are also contested issues, whereas recent attempts to advance strict protective regulations were undermined by systematic pressure from the religious leaderships and courts, leading the parliamentary sub-committee discussing the draft GBV law to change its title (and in the process its content) from “protecting women from family violence” to “protecting the entire family from violence” (Meguerditchian, 2012). In the process, women and girls of all ages (including female migrant workers) are left in a perpetual state of vulnerability and danger. Even in cases where the law does not necessarily discriminate against women, “the legal texts are

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<sup>5</sup> Legal amendments approved recently by parliamentary committees, include the following: Criminal laws, annulment of article 562, which used to allow for lesser punishment in the case of ‘crimes of honor’; Income tax laws (article 9), acknowledged gender parity on tax reduction; Transportation fees (article 9), acknowledged gender parity on tax reduction; National defense (par. 8 of article 94), extended benefits of retirement pension to both husband and wife (source: [www.nclw.org.lb](http://www.nclw.org.lb)). Another major gain took place in 2009 when Lebanese women were finally granted the legal right to open bank accounts for their minor children. Until then only fathers had this right under the pretext of minors’ guardianship, which in Lebanon is traditionally accorded to men being the acknowledged head of the family. The reversal of this practice was a result of an intense advocacy campaign organized as part of a project supported by USAID’s Transparency and Accountability Grants. It was implemented in partnership with the Institute of Progressive Women leading to an endorsement from the Association of Banks in Lebanon.(Kanaan, 2009).

quite ambiguous leaving room for ample discrimination and injustice.” Moreover, *the Lebanese legal system does not provide for a mechanism to monitor violations of gender equality* (which are evidently widespread) or for the automatic review of cases of discrimination against women, either in the interpretation of laws or in their implementation (NCLW, 2012).

## POLITICAL PARTICIPATION AND DECISION MAKING

More than any other public field, *politics in Lebanon has traditionally been a male preserve and has largely excluded women regardless of their qualifications or contributions*. For long, women were totally absent from the Council of Ministers, with the appointment of a female Minister not taking place until 2004. Since then, it has been one step forward and several others backward leaving the current Cabinet void of any female presence. Similarly, the participation of women in the Parliament is minimal -- only four female MPs succeeded in the last 2009 elections, down from six in the previous round. In all four cases, these women parliamentarians arguably owed their election success to their family (read male) relations. In fact, with only “3.1 percent of parliamentary seats now occupied by women, Lebanon ranks at the bottom of the table of parliamentary representation of women in the Middle East, below neighboring Syria at 12.4 percent, and Iraq at a comparatively high quota of 25 percent” (Ensor and Mahdawi, 2009). Recently, intensive attempts by civil society activists and women's machinery to advance a draft electoral law with a suggested 30% quota for women have been flatly rejected by politicians.

*The absence of Lebanese women from high level governmental positions extends beyond the executive and the legislative branches.* To date, there has been no female governors in Lebanon and only two female Qaemaqams (Heads of District). The year 2007, however, ushered the appointment of a female judge as President of the Military Court - an event that seems in retrospect as an aberration rather than the beginning of a trend (although it should be noted that a woman was delegated to the position of acting Public Prosecutor in 2002 and a year later, as a Counselor at the Cassation Court). And despite the high number of women in some trade unions, their presence in leadership positions remain extremely minimal (a notable exception is the appointment of a woman

### Box 4

#### **Gender Fundamentals**

**Gender equality** concerns women and men, and it involves working with men and boys, women and girls to bring about changes in attitudes, behaviors, roles and responsibilities at home, in the workplace, and in the community. Genuine equality means more than parity in numbers or laws on the books; it means expanding freedoms and improving overall quality of life so that equality is achieved without sacrificing gains for males or females.

**Female empowerment** is achieved when women and girls acquire the power to act freely, exercise their rights, and fulfill their potential as full and equal members of society. While empowerment often comes from within, and individuals empower themselves, cultures, societies, and institutions create conditions that facilitate or undermine the possibilities for empowerment.

**Gender integration** involves identifying, and then addressing, gender inequalities during strategy and project design, implementation, and monitoring and evaluation. Since the roles and power relations between men and women affect how an activity is implemented, it is essential that project managers address these issues on an ongoing basis.

**Source: USAID GENDER EQUALITY AND FEMALE EMPOWERMENT**

to preside over the Ordre of Pharmacists in the 1990s and another one to preside over the Syndicate of Lawyers in 2009). The situation is as bleak in the case of the governing bodies of the Federation of Banks and the Board of Directors of industrialists, all of which never included a female member. The Chamber of Commerce, Industry, and Agriculture has recently added five women to its twenty-members board but none were elected to the Executive Bureau. Political parties, regardless of their orientations, also have quite limited number of women within their ranks -- as little as 20% in their membership base and a mere 5% in their political bureaux based on common estimates.<sup>6</sup>

*The absence of women from decision making positions in Lebanon has often been attributed to the deeply patriarchal character of the Lebanese society governed by customary rather than codified laws.* This is enforced by “the traditional rules governing the functioning of the [Lebanese] political system” (NCLW, 2012), which by definition consider politics as a male preserve and dismiss women's views in political matters as irrelevant. In addition, the prevailing sectarian tribal system of compromise and power-sharing draws on the representational base of the various sects and religious communities, which are typically dominated by male members of leading families, and in the process undermine the possibility of women's participation. Sectarian competition has in effect restricted the abilities of women's groups to unite and push for female political representation, with women often putting the political interests of their sects and families ahead of their own interests as women, and their commitment to gender equality.<sup>7</sup>

## **PUBLIC POLICIES AND DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIES**

Since the end of the Lebanese Civil War in 1990, successive Lebanese governments have adopted an economic plan focused on currency stabilization, increasing government revenues, and rebuilding the physical infrastructure. In this context, the main priority has been given to the banking, service, and tourism sectors. In the early post-war years, such policy reflected the wish to reproduce Lebanon's pre-war international and regional role, which at the time brought high economic growth but little structural development and social equity. In terms of regional distribution, the centralized nature of the official reconstruction and development approach has not given sufficient attention to rural areas, and by extension, to the agriculture sector. At the same time, very little efforts have been invested in the social realm.

To date, *governmental policies in Lebanon continue to lack any specific vision for socioeconomic development or equitable growth.* With ongoing political bickering and animosity between the country's political leaders (and sects), pressing issues related to wage and labor rights, price stability, safety nets, housing, and education, have been dealt with mostly on an ad hoc basis and outside the context of a well-defined development strategy and plan of action. Moreover, new imposed taxation laws, and preferential provision of investment, accentuated the gap between the rich and the poor, and created a high concentration of wealth in an increasingly smaller bracket of the population. Pockets of poverty are expanding in all urban and rural areas placing at least 8% of the Lebanese population in a state of

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<sup>6</sup> There are no exact figures on the involvement of women in political parties. Figures used here are common estimates including in a recent study by Shleyta, Naziha, Ministry of Labor, 2010, Lebanon.

<sup>7</sup> A vivid example of this tension is the case of Ms. Linda Mattar, founding president of the League of Lebanese Women's Rights and an influential pioneer and advocate for women's rights in the Arab region. Her unsuccessful bids for parliament in 1996 and 2000 (running for an “Armenian seat” due to her marriage to an Armenian Lebanese) never gathered serious support from women even committed feminists, who by their own admission voted instead for candidates representing their own sects.

extreme poverty and 28.5% at the normal poverty line.<sup>8</sup> Unemployment rates are highest among the poor, constituting as many as one third among women in the South and Mount Lebanon (Laithy et al., 2008; p. 13). In the midst, most public services suffer from inefficiency with the public administration system lacking the capacity to introduce core reforms that would lead to good governance. Within these unproductive dynamics, gender issues have naturally received little attention.

For long, *women's issues have been largely neglected in Lebanon's chronically deficient development policies and plans*. But in July 2006 a newly formed Cabinet vowed in its Ministerial Statement for the first time ever in the history of the country to put in action all the commitments that Lebanon has made on women's issues in connection with the recommendations of the Beijing Conference in 1995. The subsequent Government of 2008 reiterated this commitment and emphasized that it will pursue in the same efforts to strengthen the participation of women in all financial, economic, social, and political areas. It also went one step further and confirmed the plan to implement all signed international conventions, especially the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women. Since then there has been a boost in the role of women's machinery in the country, translating on the ground in very slow (yet steady) movement towards achieving meaningful gender equality.

Today, *the main official instrument representing women's machinery in Lebanon is the National Commission for Lebanese Women (NCLW)* which traces its origin to the preparations for the 1995 Beijing Conference. Incepted originally by a Ministerial decree in 1994 as a committee to represent Lebanon in the Conference and draft in collaboration with a parallel NGO Committee the official Lebanese Report, the NCLW operates under the jurisdiction of the Prime Minister's office and draws on its allocated funds. The structure of NCLW reflects the political dynamics of the country at their highest level,<sup>9</sup> which puts it at the risk of power maneuvering and therefore, operational paralysis. However, the inclusion of capable and informed members in the General Assembly and the Executive Bureau drawn from across sectors has allowed the Commission to engage actively in many of the issues central to women's well-being and to improved gender relations. It has been noted, however, that some of these members “are not really involved in the Lebanese women's movement” and are not necessarily informed by a feminist discourse. A lack of connection (and therefore communication) with women's NGOs are considered an encumbering factor, which has undermined the outreach of NCLW to the public (Khalaf, 2005; p. 6).

*The capacities of NCLW are also limited by its consultative nature having therefore no authority to directly propose legislations or reforms*. As such, its agenda of work is focused mostly on activities that do not differ much from those carried out by any other CSOs. Moreover, its national strategy (the latest finalized at the time of writing this report) reflects its comprehensive mandate that seems to be significantly greater than its human and financial resources (the GA and Bureau members of NCLW serve mostly on a volunteer basis). In fact, its dependency on limited funds drawn from the budget of the Council of Ministers makes it in turn reliant on the support of international development agencies, which often pits it against competing (and struggling) NGOs working on the same issues. These restrictive elements do not, however, minimize the value of the work that NCLW has accomplished (as fragmented as it might be) or its strategic position within the system to influence change at the highest executive level. As such, NCLW is potentially a valuable partner for USAID/Lebanon towards the operationalization of its gender policy.

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<sup>8</sup> The World Bank defines extreme poverty as average daily consumption of \$1.25 or less and upper poverty line at about \$4.

<sup>9</sup> The Secretary General is usually appointed by the President of the Republic while the presidency and vice-presidency posts are occupied by the First Lady and the wives of the Heads of the Parliament and the Cabinet.

*Parallel to the establishment of NCLW, another governmental decree proclaimed the appointment of Gender Focal Points (GFP) in all ministries and public institutions. NCLW and the GFPs represent Lebanon's official mechanisms to address gender, and reflect the (rather timid) attempts the Lebanese State has undertaken towards the institutionalization of gender equality. Similar to NCLW, however, the abilities of GFPs are limited by the absence of overarching commitment to women's empowerment across sectors and the continuous deficiency of effective policies to prioritize gender equality. But most importantly, the GFPs seem to lack a clear and well supported function within their respective institutions, coupled with the shortage of dedicated funds along with a weak organizational and communication channels to guide them and support their work (Ibid. P. 8). But then yet again (as in the case of NCLW), the presence of GFPs provides an established structure that would allow the infiltration of governmental institutions for effective gender mainstreaming -- provided that the appropriate commitment, tools, and programs are indeed available.*

Preceding the establishment of NCLW and in the absence of a full-fledged ministry dedicated to women's affairs, *the Ministry of Social Affairs (MOSA) was for long the de facto guardian of gender-related initiatives in the Lebanese system.* Its specialized Women's Unit has been entrusted with the responsibility of evaluating women's needs across sectors, supporting the Lebanese women's movement, and organizing activities to booster women's empowerment and social development. Over the years the MOSA Women's Unit has undertaken many initiatives in that direction, mostly with the financial backing of, and in collaboration with, UN agencies and various CSOs. The Unit has been especially instrumental in the attempts to bring some better understanding of gender issues within the overall structure of the Ministry and its affiliated service centers. But despite a rich list of completed projects the long term impact of the MOSA Unit has been quite limited. Reflecting the same challenges facing NCLW and GFPs (and the CSOs community at large), the work of the Women's Unit has been often undermined by a chronic lack of political will towards gender equality, by limited allocation of resources, and particularly, by the lack of understanding of gender concepts and the absence of a well-articulated official approach to gender and development.

### **III. USAID DEVELOPMENT OBJECTIVES AND GENDER PRIORITIES: ANALYSIS AND RECOMMENDATIONS<sup>10</sup>**

USAID/Lebanon through its Country Development Strategy Statement has proposed preliminary Development Objectives (DO) and Intermediate Results (IR) structured to serve the overall CDCS Goal of *“Improved accountability and credibility of public institutions and broader economic prosperity.”* This section aims to articulate Lebanon's gender and women's empowerment issues in the context of the development sectors identified in each of the IRs, and with significance to the current portfolio of USAID projects. The section follows the same order of the IRs as proposed in the CDCS using them as sub-headings for each sub-section.

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<sup>10</sup> This section was written jointly with Margueritte Helou, specifically IR1.1, IR1.2, IR1.3 and IR2.1

## DEVELOPMENT OBJECTIVE 1

### IMPROVED CAPACITY OF THE PUBLIC SECTOR IN PROVIDING TRANSPARENT, QUALITY SERVICES ACROSS LEBANON.

#### *IR1.1 Improved public basic education for all citizens*

##### Priorities and constraints:

The overall aims of the Lebanese government for the education sector are specified in its current National Education Strategy Framework (2010–2015) as follows: governance of education, equal opportunity, social integration, economic development, and building a knowledge society (UNICEF, 2011; p. 21). If properly realized, such aims would indeed bring quality education accessible for all the Lebanese citizens, male and female. In reality, however, the sector is generally perceived as weak, highly politicized, and unable to meet its stated objectives. It reflects an *urban bias, dependency on external funding, and quality variations drawn along sectarian and geographical lines* (Nahas, 2009; p.13). Furthermore, public education in Lebanon has been for long *overshadowed by the large number of private institutions*, which absorb as much as 70% of elementary students, 60% of intermediate students, and 50% of secondary students (MEHE figures as quoted in Ibid p. 19). Such negative features have particular implications for female students with public education being the first (and often only choice) for poor families, especially in rural areas, when it comes to their daughters. At the university level, there is only one public higher education institution in the country, the Lebanese University (LU), competing with 37 better equipped and mostly more qualified private institutions graduating 55% of the Lebanese student body (Ibid, p.15). On the whole, the quality of education at LU has been undermined by an *inefficient bureaucracy, limited public financing, political interference, and the inability of the Government “to delineate a strategic vision for education, in general, and higher education, in particular”* (Ibid, p. 7). Prevailing arguments also point to the absence of political will as the main obstacle to reforming the public university, rooted in the fact that politicians and religious groups own many of the private universities and therefore manipulate the system to protect their own interests in keeping higher education within the realm of the private sector. With the public and private systems of education functioning rather independently of one another (Nahas, 2009, p. 13), the public sector is deprived of any possible trickle down effects from the private sector. And as is the case in the pre-university levels, female students are more likely to bear the negative state of the Lebanese University. Available figures indicate that women account for 70% of LU graduates, substantiating the general belief that families with limited means tend to send their boys to (more expensive) private universities that are perceived (wrongly or rightly) as better while sending their girls to LU for free - although some specialists argue that for the wealthy there seems to be no gender bias in the provision of private education for their children (Nahas, 2009; p. 52). Another argument to be noted is that the high percentage of women in the Lebanese University relates more to the accessibility of its many branches to remote rural areas and less to financial considerations and affordability.

In the last two decades, various educational reforms have been undertaken, mostly with support from international donors, to attend to the ills of public education in Lebanon. The results have been largely

marginal: *compulsory free education is yet to be enforced; students with special needs continue to be largely excluded from public schools; and the Lebanese University continues to struggle financially and qualitatively.* While all these problems affect the whole student population in the country, they are more likely to have a bigger impact on female students in the context of prevailing patriarchal cultural and traditional social values. The situation is especially problematic for female children with special needs who are generally treated with more bias than their male counterparts and are considered a bigger burden on their families. Although this is a highly understudied area in Lebanon and reliable figures are not readily available, there is a widespread perception of disability as a social taboo and source of shame, often leading parents to hide their disabled children, especially girls, to protect them and to avoid social stigma.

Close examination of completed reforms also points to the *absence of a gender dimension*. This may be a result of total reliance on quantitative indicators, which give a misleading impression of gender equality, especially in terms of the higher rates of girls' enrollment in most educational cycles (CERD, 2011; Meneem and Hanna, 2011). The most apparent discriminatory practice relates to representations of women and gender roles in school programs. Available studies, including a recent UNESCO evaluation of the content of 103 school books, indicate that reforms have failed to eliminate *traditional gender stereotypes prevalent in school curricula*, even in publications written by women authors (Chaarani and Sharaf El-Din, 2006; Hashem, 2012). Moreover, the *domination of the teaching profession by women*, constituting 75.2% of the total number of teachers, *enhances perceptions of traditional gender roles* in the country and supports existing stereotyping in books. Furthermore, with 25% of public school teachers being over 41 years of age (Ibid.), resistance to change might undermine the openness of the teaching cadre to new ideas about gender relations, leading in the process, to an enhancement of patriarchal culture and gender inequality. A case in point is a 2009 national survey conducted in Lebanon by The Status of Women in the Middle East and North Africa (SWMENA) Project. The findings revealed that an average of over 30% of women with university education and an average of 40% of women who have completed secondary education believe that, a) men are better political leaders than women, and b) in case of job scarcity men should have more right to a job than women.

Another problematic question in the public education sector is *the high drop out, repetition, and failure rates among boys relative to girls* (CERD, 2011). There are no qualitative studies that identify the causes of such gender differences or the potential impact of this issue on gender relations. There are, however, widespread concerns that these differences (and ensuing feelings of shame and frustration) could indeed lead to domestic problems (including gender-based violence), especially given the patriarchal cultural attributes of Lebanon where manhood is defined through man's role as the successful provider and protector. Finally, an issue of significance to the impact of education on the economic prospects of both male and female students is the predominantly "*underachiever and dropout*" stigma associated with *vocational and technical education* (VTE). Given that the VTE educational system in Lebanon serves about 111,000, of which over 38,000 attend the public VTE schools (Karam, 2006; CERD, 2011, Meneem and Hanna, 2011), such negative views are detrimental not only to the student body, but also to the economic needs of the country at a time of increasing poverty and widespread unemployment - two

factors that have been repeatedly highlighted to have a direct impact on gender relations and gender based violence. (Please see IR.2.1 for more details on the VTE sector).

Recommendations and proposed interventions:

USAID/Lebanon has been for long providing support to the public education sector focused largely on infrastructure rehabilitation, equipment provision, meritorious scholarships, and teachers' training. As such, it already has an established foundation to influence the integration of a gender perspective into the system and address the needs indicated above. More specifically, the current project on "Developing Rehabilitation Assistance to Schools and Teacher Improvement" (D-RASATI) provides possibilities for gender mainstreaming through the implementation of the following gender related interventions:

(1)*Build on the findings of the study: "baseline information on the state of Lebanese public schools in terms of enrollment, drop outs, repetition, community participation and teachers' instructional practices,"* to (a) prepare and inform periodic qualitative studies on issues such as causes of dropout and repetition among girls and boys, and (b) organize gender sensitive training activities for teachers to increase their capacities to deal with this problem.

Proposed indicators:

- Change in enrollment / dropout / failure / repetition / rates among students in schools that received USG assistance disaggregated by sex, age, and rural and urban status.
- Number and type of qualitative studies on causes of repetition, failure, and/or dropout among boys and girls in schools receiving USG assistance.
- Number of teachers (by sex and age) in training organized with USG assistance.
- Change in the knowledge and attitude of trained teachers (disaggregated by sex and geographic location) towards gender roles and towards majoring choices of girls versus boys (through tools such as a KAP study).

(2)*Support the design and implementation of a gender sensitive program that provides guidance on, and preparation for, university education* (selection of majors; application processes; identification of available scholarships; academic counseling; etc) to students in USAID rehabilitated schools. Currently USAP does have such a component but only for recipients of its meritorious scholarships. The program should also target teachers and parents, especially to support wider majoring possibilities for female and male students beyond prescribed areas of studies based on traditional conceptions of gender roles.

Proposed Indicators:

- Number of students / teachers participating (by age, sex, and rural and urban status) in guidance programs organized with USG assistance.
- Changes in majoring choices of girls and boys in schools benefiting from USG assistance (using school surveys and long-term monitoring).
- Changes in parents' perceptions of gender roles and attitudes towards their daughters' and sons' education, following their participation in gender sensitive activities aimed at raising community awareness to increase majoring choices for girls and boys with USG assistance (using tools such as a KAP study).



(3) *Provide support to cooperation initiatives and linkages between schools (including those in the VTE sector), media outlets, and the private sector to plan and broadcast programs aimed at changing stereotypes about gender roles, and influencing traditional attitudes towards (1) specific careers, (2) educational choices for girls and boys, and (3) appreciation and recognition of the value of VTE.*

Proposed Indicators:

- Type and number of media programs on public and VTE education designed and implemented with USG assistance to change social perceptions of traditional gender roles.
- Viewing rates of gender related programs (e.g. Documentaries on pioneer young women crossing barriers into traditional male vocations) designed and implemented with USG assistance.
- Change in awareness and appreciation of VTE, measured through surveys and changes in the number (and %) of female students choosing traditionally male VTE fields.
- Change in enrollment rates in VTE institutions disaggregated by area of specialization and by sex.

(4) *Collaborate with CERD and other relevant CSOs for the development of a ‘women’s empowerment in education index’ (drawing on work done in developing the Women’s Empowerment in Agriculture Index<sup>11</sup>). The index should be used to guide gender sensitive reviews of school curricula and to track progress towards the elimination of stereotypical representations of women and gender roles in books and in the classroom. Proposed domains to be covered in the index include: curricula development; control over curricula selection; equal access to educational resources; and leadership in school administration.*

Proposed indicators:

- Percent and numerical change in the “Women’s Empowerment in Education Index”.

(5) *Support the development of integration programs for children with special needs in USAID rehabilitated schools, focusing particularly on female students. The programs should be backed with a gender sensitive research component to identify the number (by sex) of school aged children with special needs, their gender specific educational and social needs, and lessons learned from actual integration programs in the country (if any) and elsewhere.*

Proposed indicators:

- Number and type of gender sensitive research on children with special needs in schools receiving USG assistance.
- Number and type of gender sensitive integration programs completed and adopted in schools receiving USG assistance.
- Number (%) of students with special needs (by sex, age, and rural and urban status) integrated in schools receiving USG assistance.

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<sup>11</sup> International Food Policy Research Institute (2012), Women’s Empowerment in Agriculture Index. The index is jointly supported by USAID, Feed the Future, IFPRI, and Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative (OPHDI).

(6) *Support collaboration initiatives between the Lebanese University and the main private universities targeting specifically female students and faculty, towards the provision of gender sensitive faculty development opportunities (e.g. intensive summer seminars, research residencies, joint panel discussions, national symposia), availability of scholarships for LU and VTE female students (especially in non-traditional female fields), and the establishment of student exchange programs which would benefit women and men equally.*

Proposed indicators:

- Number of women versus men in established student exchange programs with USG assistance.
- Number of male and female LU students and faculty participating in seminars / residencies at private universities with USG assistance.
- Change in beneficiaries of scholarships for LU / VTE and at private universities by sex, R/U, and area of specialization among the recipients of USG assistance.

### *IR1.2 Improved water services for all in Lebanon*

Priorities and Constraints:

The central role of women in the provision, management, and conservation of water has been long recognized, particularly in international summits such as the 1977 UN Water Conference at Mar del Plata, the 1992 UN Conference on Environment and Development in Rio, and the 2006 Fourth World Water Forum in Mexico. In the case of Lebanon where the threat of chronic and critical water shortages is predicted for as early as 2020, the need to acknowledge women's role and engage them in water related initiatives is especially urgent. In reality, however, *the tendency in the country has been to neglect women in most water sector reforms* aimed at curtailing water problems and advancing a sustainable system of integrated water resources management (IWRM). *These reforms have treated issues such as water conservation, potable water quality, and service delivery in a gender blind or, at best, a gender neutral approach.* They also lack acknowledgement of the differences between men and women when it comes to both causes and effects of water shortage. For instance, there is a general negligence of the manner gender roles in Lebanese households imply (a) different functions in the usage of water (e.g. women being traditionally in charge of cleaning) and (b) different effects on their well-being (e.g. the way rationing practices result in extra time pressure on women in their daily lives). There is also a lack of appreciation of the financial effects of water shortage on low-income households (especially female-headed) with the Lebanese having to pay double or triple water bills for many years. Furthermore, the gender blind approach to water management overlooks prevalent Lebanese cultural definitions of cleanliness which result in over-usage of water and detergents, leading to difficulties in conserving waste water and undermining the possibility of its reuse as a secondary source for irrigation.

*The negligence of women's contribution to water management is also reflected at the decision making levels.* Women in fact occupy quite senior positions in the Ministry of Energy and Water (MEW), where some of them are Heads of Department "responsible for managing projects of large scales such as dams and water supply networks, Wastewater Networks and Treatment plants, and Water Quality Monitoring section" (RMF, 2009; p. 50). Similarly, in the Ministry of Environment and the Ministry of Agriculture women lead various technical and administrative departments without any apparent discrimination or lack

of acknowledgement of their technical expertise. But as important as it actually is, the existence of women in such top positions at all the ministries relevant to water issue has not translated into significant gains in terms of integrating women's concerns in decision making processes. The main reason is related to a widespread lack of gender awareness among top administrators, men and women alike, and the absence of both political will and effective mechanisms within the ministries to mainstream gender issues. Correspondingly, the Gender Focal Point at MEW has little authority and does not enjoy any access to decision making circles (Traboulsi, 2001). As is the case in other line ministries, the potential roles of the GFP at MEW are further undermined by their loosely defined mandate, weak coordination with the concerned stakeholders, and lack of systematic training possibilities on effective tools and approaches to gender mainstreaming and sensitization among their colleagues. Women are also poorly represented in agricultural cooperatives (with only one out of 287 headed by a woman, based on GEWAMED figures) and in local water councils in most parts of the country - a situation that is rooted in patriarchal cultural notions of public representation along with the ambiguity of land inheritance rights of women in some communities.

*The gender blind approach of the Lebanese government to water issues also characterizes the civil society sector in the country.* In a recent survey conducted to identify the demands of women NGOs, neither the need for data on gender and water, nor any concerns regarding the effects of current water policies on women surfaced in the results (SWMENA/Lebanon, 2009). Similarly, *the water related projects of international agencies operating in Lebanon, including USAID and UNDP, are largely focused on gender neutral institutional capacity building and infrastructure development* - their general aims are to address unsustainable water management practices, environmental risks, and water governance shortcomings (UNDP, 2010-2014). The unstated assumption of these projects is that by improving management and service delivery across the country both men and women will automatically benefit equally (especially considering the male to female ratio of the population). Experience has shown, however, that women are often sidestepped in situations of change and reforms, especially in cases that involve training on new technologies. Moreover, awareness building initiatives on water use rightly target school children but ignore women and other equally important age groups.

*One notable exception to such gender blind activities is the GEWAMED project* (Mainstreaming Gender Dimensions into Water Resources Development and Management in the Mediterranean Region), financed by the European Commission and implemented in Lebanon by the Rene Mouawad Foundation (RMF). The overall objective of this one of its kind project is to contribute to the adoption of gender sensitive water policies and introduction of gender perspectives in Integrated Water Resources Management, through (a) the exchange of gender related information amongst concerned stakeholders in Lebanon and (b) the establishment of a national information network on gender and water. While the objectives of GEWAMED Lebanon are yet to be achieved, the project does provide a starting point to build on, and expand into, meaningful gender mainstreaming activities in water sector reforms. One of the essential areas that have been marked for immediate attention as per the preliminary findings of GEWAMED Lebanon, is the urgent need for (a) *national gender disaggregated data on water usage* and (b) *in-depth research on gender and water across regions* - both of which are prerequisites for any accurate needs assessment and sustainable solutions to problems related to women's role in water management and services.

*The deficiency in gender related data is predominant in the overall field of agriculture, where women are estimated to comprise over 40% of the labor force.<sup>12</sup> Water problems in this field carry particular difficulties for women who are typically “responsible for bringing water from local wells or springs in areas” where water is often not available through established channels - according to available estimates “40% of remote areas in Lebanon have no proper access to water.” And while women might not have significant role in all decisions related to farming activities, “the allocation of water for livestock is a woman-dominated activity” (RMF, 2011; p. 46-47). In this connection, it is worth noting an important initiative that has significant implications for the situation of women in agriculture (and by definition for gender and water issues), namely the “Lebanese National Observatory for Women in Agriculture and Rural Areas” (NOWARA). NOWARA is a specialized governmental body established in 2008 within the Ministry of Agriculture with support from the Italian Government and ONILFA to identify the concerns of female rural workers in agriculture and bring them to policy and decision making levels. It also aims to empower rural women with technical training and access to information in all stages related to farming and agricultural production. As such it provides international organizations operating in Lebanon, including USAID, a solid base to reach out to rural women (especially through its system of appointed Regional Coordinators) and to potentially bring women’s role in water management to the forefront.*

*Recommendations and proposed interventions:*

The current project of USAID/Lebanon on “Lebanon Water and Wastewater Sector Support” (LWWSS) provides an excellent platform to launch a set of interventions that could facilitate the integration of gender issues and women’s concerns into water sector reforms and national activities. To this end, cooperation with NOWARA, the GEWAMED division at the Renee Mouawad Foundation, relevant UN agencies, and an increasingly large number of Lebanese NGOs focused on environmental issues would be especially beneficial. USAID/Lebanon could also draw on a growing interest among a large number of female university students (especially from rural areas) in environmental studies, agronomy, and water engineering (CERD, 2010-2011). Possible interventions include the following:

*(1) Build on the success of a recent awareness campaign conducted as part of LWWSS (on the benefits of water conservation, of preventing water contamination, and of paying water dues on time) to develop a new campaign focused on women’s key role in water conservation (the first campaign resulted in an increase in the subscribers’ base although an increase in awareness of the importance of general water conservation was not measured). Such a campaign should be planned in cooperation with relevant NGOs and UN agencies, municipalities, the private sector, local water councils, and Regional Water Establishments and could focus on issues such as “water contamination and family health”, “responsible usage of water for household cleaning” and “overuse of detergents and chemical products in house cleaning.” Transmitted messages should highlight to men and women in charge of household cleaning the various dangers associated with an overuse of cleaning products on water resources, family health and the environment in general. Parallel to this awareness campaign LWWSS could use its current outreach*

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<sup>12</sup> It is difficult to project accurately on the involvement of women in agricultural activities, in terms of both number and type of work. But some FAO and UNDP estimates indicate that in certain labor intensive agricultural sectors (e.g. Tobacco plantation) and household-based productions women actually constitute the absolute majority. They are typically not included in national statistics.

events at schools to also underscore the important contribution of women to water conservation and integrating it in its training agenda.

Proposed indicators:

- Number of campaigns focused on woman's role in water conservation and prevention of water pollution completed with USG assistance.
- Type and number of stakeholders (e.g. Regional Water Establishments, NGOs, municipalities) involved in the campaigns planned and completed with USG assistance.
- Number and type of media channels involved in water related campaigns planned and completed with USG assistance.
- Number of water users trained on efficient water management (a current LWWSS indicator) disaggregated by sex and topic of training (e.g. women's role in water conservation).
- Changes in house cleaning practices and usages of detergents and other chemicals (through a KAP study).

*(2) Provide assistance to the National Council for Lebanese Women to produce and implement sector training for GFPs (who officially fall under the authority of NCLW) aimed at empowering them and helping them play the active role expected of them. Besides the GFPs at the water related ministries (i.e. Agriculture, Environment, and Social Affairs) the training program must also target agriculture cooperatives, Directors Generals at MEW, and top administrators at the Regional Water Establishments.*

Proposed indicators:

- Number of gender sensitive, sector training activities organized with USG assistance.
- Number of participants in sector training activities organized with USG assistance (disaggregated by sex, position, affiliation).

*(3) Support women's centers to undertake in-depth research and disaggregated data collection on gender and water in Lebanon.*

Proposed indicators:

- Number of studies on gender and water conducted with USG assistance.
- Number of publicly accessible gender sensitive data sets that relate to water use provided with USG assistance.

*(4) Cooperate with NOWARA to reach out to rural women both directly and through NOWARA's Regional Coordinators to train them on better approaches to water usage within the agriculture sector.*

Proposed indicators:

- Changes in water usage and management approaches among rural women within the agricultural sector.
- Number and type of training activities for NOWARA's Regional Coordinators and for rural women on water management planned and organized with USG assistance.

### IR1.3 Improved governance initiative in service delivery

#### Priorities and Constraints:

*The Lebanese political culture and its inherent conflictual, patriarchal, sectarian, and family-based characteristics have had negative impact on the prospects of improving governance innovation in service delivery.* Accountability is hard to achieve in a society where the positions of citizens on politicians, administrators, and policies are dictated by factors other than performance and public interest. This becomes particularly true in times of crisis and political deadlock common in the history of Lebanon. The attitudes of Lebanese citizens are largely influenced by a specific perception of the “other” and by the priority of preserving their respective sects, identity, and perceived interests - even if they come at the expense of basic human rights, productivity, or good service delivery. As such, the more intense conflict is among the various sects, the more human and citizens’ rights are relegated to a lower position on their political priorities. Correspondingly, the 2010 Legatum Prosperity Index ranked Lebanon’s social capital 99 out of 110 countries and showed that Lebanese generally do not trust others. With evidence that prosperity and strong social fabric are inexorably linked, the priority of building trust and social capital in Lebanon requires greater intercultural, inter-communal, and inter-municipal cooperation.

*Lebanese women are not able to detach themselves from the prevalent political culture, even with the recognition of its being a major obstacle to the realization of their full rights as citizens.* This is no clearer than in the female political attitudes as measured by electoral behavior and position on basic conflictual national issues (Helou, 2002). It is also evident in the lack of cooperation between women’s rights organizations and their failure to transcend confessional boundaries to form a critical mass capable of influencing political decision making in the country. The impact of these factors is further exasperated by the presence of strong “clientist” networks in the country drawn along sectarian and family lines. The significant role that these networks play in service delivery and in influencing the status of women has been neglected in relevant literature and in the work of NGOs which tend to instead blame all ills in the country only on political confessionalism.

*The various problems dominating local governance are aggravated by low level of community involvement and participation across the country, especially among women.* This issue is rooted in the electoral law which limits the right of voting in local councils to those registered in the municipal area and excludes non-registered residents regardless of the length of their residency in this area. With forced displacements during the civil war and the high level of internal and external migration in most parts of the country, many (non-registered) residents in both rural and urban areas end up by having no vote in their areas of residence and therefore, no say in matters affecting their daily lives. They also do not have any means for holding local officials accountable. Female residents are especially affected by this situation and are more likely than men to have neither the incentives nor the support to get involved in local politics. Their lack of interest in civic and political participation (as confirmed in the findings of SWMENA/Lebanon 2009) is further enforced by local resistance to female representation in general. A case in point is the municipal elections of 1998 which showed lack of popular support to female

candidates, especially those who became registered residents in their municipal areas at a later point in their lives through marriage (Helou, 1999). Considering widespread opposition to reforming the electoral law and dealing with the “registration” issue there is an urgent need to pursue women’s participation in local governance outside the formal channels.

*Another feature in the Lebanese governance system that is not supportive of women’s role is the nature of municipal electoral battles which are still waged along traditional family and tribal lines rather than on the basis of electoral programs* - the more intense the battles are, the more prevalent the perception of women’s incapability to successfully participate and compete. Such a feature was found to be true in most regions regardless of the female candidate’s educational level or sectarian affiliation (Helou, 1999). It clearly undermines female representation on municipal councils and results in weak female involvement in local affairs, as indicated in the low percentage of female candidates in municipal elections (approaching zero in many areas). As a result, half of the community and its respective demands remain out of the concerns of local decision makers.

Despite all these constraints, advancing governance innovation in service delivery at the local level is nevertheless feasible due to a set of enabling factors. For one, the relative homogeneity of local communities and the absence of confessional distribution in the local councils would help overcoming obstacles seen at the national level. Moreover, the presence of an active local civil society along with the support of a wide range of international organizations could facilitate the implementation of remedial interventions and in a relatively short period of time.

#### Recommendations and possible interventions:

USAID/Lebanon is currently developing a program, namely BALADI (RFA issued in March 2012), that encourages innovation in service delivery by local governments. The program is set to sponsor in-kind competitive grants to be managed by local NGOs in support of municipal projects that respond to the governance and economic needs of the Lebanese citizens. The BALADI program builds on the hypothesis that many municipalities in the country enjoy outstanding leadership but lack the financial capital to realize their visions. The proposed program makes references to gender and woman empowerment as a cross cutting theme to be addressed by the awardees. But it is not clear on how this will be specifically recognized in the award - it is therefore recommended that gender and women empowerment are underscored through the disaggregation of proposed indicators and/or by including additional gender-specific indicators (e.g. an indicator to assess progress being made by women in penetrating local service delivery at the decision making levels). Furthermore, the proposed BALADI program suggests the use of “localized / municipal-level surveys” to assess citizens’ satisfaction. This survey may be developed to also assess citizens’ awareness of gender issues and women’s empowerment. Similarly, a proposed “survey of assisted CSOs” could be useful to evaluate targeted CSOs focused on women’s issues and to determine the type of advocacy needed to shape decision making in local institutions. In addition to the BALADI program, the following is a list of possible interventions that are in line with USAID’s strategic goals in Lebanon:

*(1)Contribute to building trust and social cohesion within local communities by ensuring citizen participation and inducing in the process a sense of ownership of policies, projects, and programs*

*affecting their lives, especially among the female segment.* One approach would involve supporting the establishment of specialized local community committees (or shadow municipal committees) with equal male female participation to aid municipalities in the various aspects of their work, especially in identifying and responding to community needs. Cooperation between local governments and these committees would contribute to social cohesion, psychological ownership of adopted policies and projects, and more responsive services (especially sensitive to the needs of women).

Proposed indicators:

- Change in the membership of local community committees created with USG assistance (disaggregated by sex, age, residency status, profession).
- Number of proposals initiated by female members of LCCs and submitted to local councils.
- Change in public satisfaction with services delivered disaggregated by sex, age, residency status, and sector (measured by such tools as client satisfaction surveys).

*(2)Build on the findings and lessons learned of an assessment previously completed as part of the NDI Shariky project to encourage and build the capacities of women and young candidates to run for elections.*

Proposed indicators:

- Number of women and young candidates succeeding in the upcoming municipal elections who have benefitted from USG assistance.
- Public satisfaction with the performance of the winning women candidates.

*(3)Support through training, studies, surveys, and campaigns the development of a gender sensitive governance culture rooted in citizens' knowledge of their duties and rights, in their capacities to exercise and protect those rights, and in their abilities to hold those who breach such rights accountable.* This intervention could build on the findings of the SWMENA/Lebanon 2009 survey discussed above, which indicated a prevalent victim culture and highlighted the need for public awareness campaigns targeting women and men alike of all ages and professions on their citizens' rights.

Proposed indicators:

- Number of participants in activities designed to raise public awareness on the above issues and supported by USG assistance (disaggregated by sex, age, level of education, sect, profession, urban / rural residence).
- Change in the number of reported cases to official authorities on breaches of rights (disaggregated by sex of the person reporting, age, level of education, sect, profession, urban / rural residence status).
- Changes in electoral behavior of pre and post municipal election (through surveys on electoral behavior to be conducted in areas where awareness raising activities were held with USG assistance, disaggregated by sex, age, level of education, sect, profession, residence urban/rural). These can be compared with the results of previously conducted surveys on this issue.



## IR1.4 Strengthened civil society's ability to create a stronger civic culture and more democratic governance

### Priorities and constraints:

*Modern Lebanon enjoys an active and large civil society.* In the post-war period, the civil society sector continued to grow, encompassing as many as 5,000 to 7,000 registered organizations at different points (based on CDR estimates). Today, many of these CSOs are engaged in the provision of much-needed social and educational services, in pushing for an agenda of sociopolitical change, and in trying to hold the government accountable to its claims of democracy, human rights, and good governance. Many others, however, are focused on philanthropic and charitable giving without a development dimension in their work. And while many are secular in orientation, a significant number of NGOs and CSOs (used interchangeably in this report) are of religious nature affiliated with one sectarian establishment or another.

*Women's issues have increasingly occupied a significant place in the work of CSOs* -- whether through poverty alleviation projects, advocacy to eliminate GBV, participatory election initiatives, or campaign for equal citizenship rights (among others). Despite good intentions and noted efforts, however, the abilities of CSOs to contribute as catalyst of change to meaningful transformations in equal gender relations and female empowerment are constrained by many gaps, including the following:

### *No clear understanding of basic concepts*

The bulk of CSOs in Lebanon claim to target women and many include gender issues as (direct or indirect) focus areas on their agendas. However, the findings of this assessment indicate that most of them lack a clear understanding of basic concepts related to gender, gender mainstreaming, and female empowerment. Misconceptions about women and about gender, coupled with a general lack of knowledge of necessary tools often result in weak women specific projects that address their issues in isolation from the overall social context and gender relations. Related to this point is the fact that “gender issues” (often confused with “women’s issues”) continue to be an add-on to the agendas of most CSOs rather than an integral part of their overall programming.

### *Gender focal points*

Some CSOs have taken the initiative of appointing a Gender Focal Point in their ranks (in part in response to donors’ requirements or preferences, which incidentally is not the case of USAID/Lebanon). Often the GFPs, however, are selected in an ad hoc manner -- mostly for being a woman -- without necessarily having any substantive knowledge of the related issues, concepts, or tools. Furthermore, in the absence of effective knowledge sharing mechanisms and weak staff retention in most CSOs gender-related training for GFPs (often provided by donor organizations) remain restricted to the individual and does not trickle down to the rest of the organization. It is clear from the consultations conducted as part of this assessment and from available studies that there is a lack of a “culture of gender equality” in the overall structure of most NGOs with the predominance of an individualistic (rather than organizational) approach to dealing with this issue.

### *Gender inequality linked to underdevelopment*

In most CSOs (and the Lebanese society at large), there is lack of awareness of the connection between gender inequality, on the one hand, and issues such as poverty, human rights, and sustainable development, on the other. As a result, women's empowerment and gender relations are often neglected and treated as secondary (rather than an essential element) to such issues deemed as priorities by many organizations.

### *Cooperation and coordination among CSOs*

Related to the previous point is the failure of most women's organizations in Lebanon (including the official women's machinery) to make programmatic and conceptual linkages with other CSOs involved in the myriad of socio-economic and political priorities facing the country today. In most instances, they operate in "islands" setting separated not only from the rest of the civil society community but also from each other. Besides its effects on the ability of NGOs to turn "gender issues" into "national issues," this lack of cooperation and coordination has often resulted in inefficiency, duplication, and waste of resources. Furthermore, women's concerns are fragmented over many organizations competing over limited financial resources and outside the framework of a well-defined development strategy or a unified vision for women's empowerment. This sense of competition has been enhanced by the lack of interest among most funding institutions to forge cooperation between NGOs by for example, earmarking funds for joint activities.

### *Sectarian bias persists in NGOs*

As stated in Section 2 of this report, sectarianism in Lebanon today permeates all social, political, and economic institutions and relations in the country -- NGOs are definitely not immune to its effects. In fact, the very existence of many NGOs (especially large and old) is rooted in the sectarian and religious making of the country, originally spurring out of concerns for the interests of one sect or another. Some of the organizations have reproduced (and unintentionally re-enforced) the sectarian structures dominating the governmental system. For instance, the Lebanese Women's Council, a secular institution that functions as a union and comprises over 100 NGOs in its membership, follows a policy of leadership where Muslims and Christians alternate in the presidency of the Council. It is also established that the vice president should always be of a religion different from that of the president. As such, sectarian bias (whether stated or implied) often precedes common gender interests and limits the possibilities of effective cooperation and coordination among many NGOs.

### *Need for continuing research on women's issues*

Despite increasing interest today in women's issues within the Lebanese civil society, related research continue to be scarce. NGOs in Lebanon generally operate without access to reliable data and substantive information to guide and inform their work agendas. Moreover, linkages between the academic community and the NGOs to advance knowledge sharing and knowledge building are almost inexistent. At the same time, funding agencies rarely (if ever) support the establishment of ongoing research programs within their beneficiary CSOs, and tend instead to focus on limited research "activities" tied to specific projects. This dearth of evidence based research has undermined the abilities of CSOs to spark informed public debates on pressing issues and to substantiate their advocacy initiatives convincingly.

### *Weak CSO advocacy*

Advocacy as a strategy for social change continues to be quite weak across civil society in Lebanon. In most organization, it remains a time-bound activity restricted to specific projects with little continuity and limited outreach. Except for sporadic public campaigns on matters such as GBV (by established organizations such as KAFA) and citizenship rights, CSOs in Lebanon are yet to fully benefit from the power of the media and modern communication technologies to put forward women's issues on the official agenda and in the public mind. Activists and specialists alike cite limited technological and financial resources as a cause for this deficiency. Dominated by financial interests all sorts of media channels in Lebanon have been used instead to enhance stereotypical images and harmful representations of women and gender relations rather than their elimination.

### *Recommendations and proposed interventions:*

USAID/Lebanon is already engaged in various initiatives that target the sustainability and effectiveness of Lebanese CSOs, especially through its civil society program "Promoting Active Citizen Engagement in Lebanon" (PACE)." PACE's focus on enhancing the potentials of civil society actors, provides an excellent opportunity to bring the issue of female empowerment closer to the core of civil society agendas. To this end, gender issues can be infused into all planned activities (e.g. training, campaigns, etc.) to reflect the concerns of both men and women. Engaging women's machinery (especially NCLW and the ministerial GFPs) and relevant UN agencies and NGOs committed to gender equality in the design and implementation of program activities would enhance cooperation and allow the integration of women's issues into the broader agenda of CSOs. Given the significant role the media plays in influencing public opinion, awareness and knowledge building, activities targeting and sensitizing media professionals (male and female) on the centrality of female empowerment to political and economic development would be especially important.

One important issue for USAID/Lebanon to consider in its relations with the Civil Society community in Lebanon is the effects of the Counter Terrorism Act (CTA) and Partner Vetting System (PVS) on its ability to engage many potentially effective NGOs in its programs of activities. In the context of this assessment, some NGOs specifically expressed their concerns that adhering to the requirements imposed by CTA/PVS (a) would undermine their impartiality in terms of service delivery to their constituency, and (b) deprives a large proportion of the most needy population (by the virtue of their often "vague association" with specific terrorist-designated groups) of badly needed services. Such exclusion ultimately makes this population segment even more susceptible to the influence of "terrorist" groups.

Besides existing USAID projects, the Mission in Lebanon could consider strengthening the capacities of CSOs to act as catalyst for change through the following proposed interventions:

*(1) Build the technical capacities of CSOs in the areas of gender mainstreaming, gender assessment, and gender programming regardless of their mandate through training open to all their staff, not only the Gender Focal Points. A "gender literacy" initiative would create a common basic understanding of gender among CSOs and enhance a culture of gender sensitivity across the sector whereas, gender issues would become an integral part of programming, rather than just an add-on element or a concern solely for women's organization. Including a knowledge-transfer component (with measurable output / outcome*

indicators) in such initiative would ensure long term continuity of commitment and information within organizations.

Proposed indicators:

- Number of CSOs assisted in gender related activities and training by age, sex, and organizational duties of the beneficiaries.
- Number of male and female beneficiaries in USG assisted CSOs.
- Number of standards and tools adopted in women's empowerment programming of CSOs with USG assistance .

*(2)Support substantive and evidence-based research on women and gender relations in Lebanon, especially on topics with linkages between gender empowerment and other priority issues in the country (e.g. good governance, poverty, transparency, political participation, human rights, etc.).*

Proposed indicator:

- Number of completed / published / cited studies on gender with USG assistance

*(3)Support the financial and human resource capacities of CSOs to design and implement **collaboratively** effective advocacy and outreach campaigns on issues related to women's rights and empowerment, especially GBV, sexual harassment, and women's economic and legal rights.*

Proposed indicators:

- Impact of gender-focused campaigns completed with USG assistance measured by public surveys and user feedback assessing perception of intended message.
- Number and type of the different stakeholders involved in the campaigns planned / completed with USG assistance
- Number of media channels used in gender-related campaigns completed with USG assistance
- Number of media coverage / references about CSO campaigns planned with USG assistance.
- Number of joint CSOs activities organized with USG assistance.
- Impact of gender related training activities on the number of gender related advocacy events conducted by CSOs trained with USG assistance.
- Number and target of collaborative advocacy initiatives (by regional and thematic focus of participating CSOs) designed and completed with USG assistance.

*(4)Support the development of research and training programs on the concept and tools of "gender budgeting" to be advocated for implementation in Lebanon at macro and micro levels, drawing on best practices and successful experiences in other countries such as Australia and South Africa. The programs should target CSOs in collaboration with NCLW, the media, research centers, UN agencies, and parliamentary budget committee.*

Proposed indicators:

- Research studies and training workshops (by organizational type and sex of participants) on gender budgeting completed with USG assistance.

- Change in level of knowledge on “gender budgeting” among relevant stakeholders benefiting from USG assistance (measured by impact evaluation and participants’ feedback).
- Reviews of national budgets from a gender perspective and proposals for budget revisions to better reflect women’s needs and gender related priorities by CSOs benefitting from USG assistance.

(5) *Support the development of a program on “gender legal literacy” that aims to strengthen the skills of relevant CSOs and the media to be able to identify gender discrimination gaps in existing laws, to lobby the legal establishment to eliminate such gaps, and to sensitize the public at large on women’s legal rights.* The program should include training for judges to increase their knowledge of international conventions related to female empowerment (such as CEDAW) to be implemented in collaboration with NGOs focused on women and gender issues (e.g. Pioneer CSOs such as KAFA). Ideally, “gender legal literacy” should be integrated into the curriculum of the judiciary college, which is currently void of any serious attention to gender related international treaties and commitments that Lebanon has signed (as indicated in an interview with KAFA President).

Proposed indicators:

- Number of USG supported CSOs establishing gender legal literacy programs.
- Impact of the gender legal literacy program on CSOs, and the media in identifying gender gaps and needs.
- Number and type of media programs on women’s legal rights completed with USG assistance.
- Number of proposals for judicial curriculum revisions and gender sensitization programs completed with USG assistance.

(6) *Support CSOs (such as KAFA) aiming to establish accessible and “secular” regional shelters for abused women (including female migrant workers),* noting that existing shelters in Lebanon are all affiliated with religious establishments (e.g. YWCA, Nuns’ Order, etc.), and as such are not easily accessible to women from all communities. Such shelters should be well equipped, well-staffed with specialized and informed personnel, and welcoming to everyone based on established human rights principles.

Proposed indicator:

- Milestone for the establishment of regional independent shelters by CSOs with USG assistance (Proposed milestones: shelter proposed, shelter agreed by CSO stakeholders, site located, fund-raising campaign launched, site acquired, facility designed, facility licensed / approved, funded, contracted)

## **DEVELOPMENT OBJECTIVE 2**

### **ENHANCED ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY FOR PEOPLE LIVING IN THE LEBANON’S POOREST REGIONS**

#### *IR2.1 Increased job readiness through secondary and post-secondary education*

Priorities and constraints:

*Many of the serious challenges related to enhancing economic opportunities for the Lebanese, in general, and for women (especially those living in poor rural areas), in particular, emanate from (a) the absence of human development policy and (b) the ineffectiveness of the education system in bridging the gap between the demand for, and supply of, human resources. Some specialists confirm “policy making on human development seems to constitute a non-event in [the Lebanese] national government. The files on human development and job creation appear to slumber in the bottom drawers of the public administration” (Schellen, 2012). The implications of such a situation are especially problematic for the female population, with girls and women often representing a majority in the student body. Available statistics also confirm the negative situation of women in the labor market: (a) a 6% national unemployment rate that reaches as high as 30% among women below 30 years of age compared to 17% among men in the same age group; and b) a significant gender pay gap which varies significantly among sectors, reaching as high as 38% in the transport, post, and telecom sector; 23% in the manufacturing sector; 21% in agriculture; 10.8% in trade; and 6.2% in the services, financial, and intermediation sectors (CAS, SIF, 2011; p.6).*

A primary reason behind labor market problems in Lebanon, especially for women, is the *lack of effective gender sensitive career guidance framework within the education system*, despite the existence of several specialized institutions, such as the Office of Guidance and Counseling at the Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MEHE), the Lebanese National Employment Office, the Career Guidance Center at the American University of Beirut, and The Career Guidance Center at the Hariri Foundation. The ongoing general discrepancy between post-secondary education and market demands indicates that the efforts of such institutions have not yielded far-reaching consequences for Lebanese students in the area of career guidance and counseling” (Ayyash-Abdo, Alamudin, & Mukallid, 2010; p.14). Moreover, orientation and educational guidance activities carried out by major universities focus mainly on increasing enrollment with little attention paid to gender issues. In this context, available studies highlight the stated ongoing demands of high school students for more effective major-specific information systems to help them in the process of making appropriate career choices that would guarantee them jobs upon graduation (El-Amine, 2003; Abouché and Kfoury, 2008). In the meantime, students rely for guidance on career choices on their parents, teachers, and peers, who generally lack specialized knowledge of market needs and tend to reproduce stereotypical perceptions of traditional majors and careers for women (Ibid and Abouché & Nasser, 2000).

Another problem contributing to the gap between the educational system and the labor market in Lebanon is the *lack of strategic planning in the geographical distribution of the various faculties of the Lebanese University*. While LU has since 1975 brought (almost free) higher education closer to home for many young women in different rural and urban areas of the country, “regionalization” decisions and the type of faculties made available have been dictated by confessional, political, and financial considerations rather than by a systematic knowledge of market needs. As such cost and geographical proximity have been a determining factor in the choice for university and, by extension for majors, especially among rural female students. The selection of majors have also been influenced by easy enrollment requirements, which amount to simply holding the official Baccalaureate at most departments of the Lebanese University. Consequently, a large number of women often end up with fields of specialization that reflect

traditional gender roles (e.g. teaching and nursing) and limited career choices in an increasingly competitive job market.

*A general preference among Lebanese men and women for higher academic education at the expense of vocational and technical education* (as discussed above in IR 1.1) has also been a factor in limiting their career choices and undermining their job readiness. Furthermore, despite a recent increase in the enrollment of female students in public VTE schools (amounting to 48.9% of the total number of students (CERD, 2011; p. 60)), their specialization choices reveal the same trend dominating academic higher education institutions, keeping the number of women in traditionally male dominated fields significantly low (CERD, 2011; and Meneem and Hanna, 2011). Moreover, similar to the academic higher education system the VTE sector does not systematically respond to market needs in a manner that increases the job readiness of male and female graduating students. Nevertheless, in recent years “the Government of Lebanon has decided without much analysis or strategic planning to double the capacity of the VTE that is offered in the public schools by expanding the number of schools and extending it regionally to about 115 schools. [...] The relevant authorities have no definitive plans as to what educational programs are to be offered at these schools, and no operating budgets have been allocated to them” (Karam, p. 263).

#### Recommendations and proposed interventions:

USAID/Lebanon currently supports various initiatives that aim to contribute to the educational and employment prospects of Lebanese youth, including the University Students Assistance Program (USAP), BALADI, and D-RASATI (discussed earlier in this report). The following gender sensitive interventions are proposed for integration into the activities of these programs to enhance the job readiness of Lebanese men and women alike, contribute to better linkages between predominant industries and educational institutions, and increase the relevance of university curricula to job market requirements:

*(1)Extend the scope of USAP (which provides merit based-scholarships to public school students to attend higher quality American educational institutions in the country) to include female students from the public VTE sector as well.* It is highly advisable that such program includes a training component (locally and abroad) to be designed in collaboration with the private sector for top students, with emphasis on female students pursuing male-dominated specialization. Dissemination of information on such scholarships through the media (e.g. TV interviews with female beneficiaries) would be especially helpful to change attitudes towards VTE and to women’s entry into fields traditionally considered men’s domains.

#### Proposed indicators:

- Change in the number of beneficiaries of USG scholarships (disaggregated by sex, institution, and field of study).
- Number of media outreach programs advocating equal access to scholarships provided with USG support.

*(2)Support the establishment of a national institute for career guidance (with regional branches) to provide effective gender-sensitive services to students across the country (possibly as part of the BALADI project).* The institute and its regional centers should be developed in cooperation with local

municipalities, the private sector, CSOs, labor syndicates, and the Lebanese Diaspora. A central national board with equal male and female representation would be responsible for the development of the guidance programs to be rooted in periodic gender sensitive needs assessments of national and regional labor markets. The Board should draw in its membership on business establishments and experts in human development. Such institute (and its regional centers) would be a major stepping stone for USAID to achieve the goals of the BALADI program, facilitate women's entry into a wider range of professions, contribute to equitable regional economic growth, and help decrease the wave of internal and external immigration among male and female young people. An internship component for female students in the private sector, especially in traditionally male-dominated professions, would be especially useful in changing their perceptions of certain careers.

Proposed indicators:

- Milestone for the establishment of a national career guidance institute and its regional branches with a representative central board (membership disaggregated by sex and sector).
- Number of students benefiting from career guidance supported by USG assistance (disaggregated by sex, sect, age, educational cycle, type of school).
- Percentage of female students choosing traditionally male-dominated fields along with percentage of male students choosing traditionally female-dominated fields as a result of career guidance carried out with USG assistance.

*(3)Support the involvement of parents and parents' associations in gender sensitive career guidance programs to enrich their knowledge of market needs and to influence their role in their children's decisions on their educational and career choices.*

Proposed indicator:

- Number of parents seeking career guidance for their male and female children (measured by career guidance institutes benefiting from USG assistance).

*(4)Support the establishment of regional centers of competence to enhance Vocational and Technical Education training services in locations with heavy concentration of various relevant industries. Such centers, with managerial boards composed specially of representatives of women-owned enterprises, could play an effective role in the development of gender-sensitive leadership skills and best practices necessary for job readiness and competitiveness.*

Proposed indicators:

- Number of centers of competence established with USG assistance.
- Number of women receiving gender sensitive leadership skills training at centers established with USG assistance



## IR2.2 Reduced poverty through enhanced competitiveness that expands micro, small, and medium-sized enterprise growth.

### Priorities and constraints:

Based on World Bank and UNDP estimates 8% of the Lebanese population live below extreme poverty line and 28.5% are below the upper poverty line. Burdened by ongoing political conflict, mounting unemployment, a burgeoning public deficit, and a national debt of over \$61 billion that constitutes about 150% of the Gross National Product, the Lebanese Government has neither the resources nor the vision to combat poverty and reduce income disparity. In this context, micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs) are increasingly seen as an essential player in economic development processes and poverty reduction, given their role in job creation, innovation, higher productivity, and greater social equality (World Bank, 2006; p. 7). They provide the only employment and income source for many poor households, disproportionately so for women. Their importance is accentuated by the fact that MSMEs in Lebanon represent a significantly large segment of the private sector. A European Union MEDA assessment conducted in 2005 indicated that the Lebanese industrial structure is made up mostly of enterprises with less than 5 employees (90%), with the majority of them not formally registered. It also showed that commerce and retail MSMEs operating within the informal sector form 30% of GDP and employ 25% of the labor force (Isaia, 2005). On the whole, the ILO estimates the number of MSMEs in Lebanon at 198,000, with 88% of them employing 5 or less people. Furthermore, about 51% of the total working population in Lebanon are absorbed into enterprises with less than 50 employees (ILO, 2007; p. 12). With such figures, Lebanon is indeed a small enterprise economy and the well being of the Lebanese society is directly linked to the functioning of the MSMEs sector.

*The share of women in the MSME sector in Lebanon is quite low, with figures ranging between 8% and 10% (UNDP 2008; ILO 2007), despite the absence of legal discrimination in setting up businesses, acquiring formal loans from banks, or owning property and resources. Regardless of such provisions, women's ability to develop and register businesses is limited by their concentration in the informal sector, which in turn restrict their access to formal loans and organizational support. According to most available studies, women owners of micro or small enterprises generally have difficulties receiving quality training and business development services. They also face particular challenges moving into outside markets. This is largely due to restrictions on women's mobility, especially in the rural areas.*

*While there is an increasing interest in supporting MSMEs within the donor community, and despite the abundance of business support services, most programs are gender blind and do not address women-specific constraints regarding enterprise development. Such constraints are mainly rooted in the nature of gender relations within the family, which burden them with an unfair load of domestic and care responsibilities and put limitations on their time, access to resources, and ability to make decisions freely. Similarly, the Small and Medium Enterprises Unit within the Ministry of Economy and Trade (the only such unit within the governmental system) as well as organizations such the Chamber of Commerce hardly assimilate gender in their programs and policies and therefore fail to support their chances for enterprise expansion (Abdo and Kerbage, 2012; p. 69).*

*The majority of civil society programs that do target women directly rely on micro finance services, based on a belief that linking informal entrepreneurs to formal banks necessarily leads to the formalization of their businesses.* Yet the assumption that “the transition is automatic reveals a lack of understanding of the wider causes of informality, such as the low productivity of businesses, the lack of incentives to formalize one’s business, and the generally survivalist types of enterprise activities that micro finance supports” (Ibid; p. 73). Another problem in *current support programs (advanced both by local and international organizations) tend to focus largely on women in micro enterprises and ignore small and middle income women-owning businesses* with high growth potentials but limited operational knowledge or abilities to advance. In fact, a complicated regulatory system, unnecessary administrative compliance requirements, and draconian discretionary bureaucratic powers adversely affect the competitiveness of SMEs (ILO, 2007, p. 18) and inhibit women from expanding their micro enterprises. On the other hand, it should be noted that a 2005 survey by Mercy Corps indicated that both male and female owners of MSMEs in Lebanon seemed to have good access to infrastructure services. In general, most surveyed enterprises reported that they had access to water (65%), electricity (85%), sewerage systems (60%), and roads (70%). A lower percentage benefits from the telecommunication services (49%) and transportation facilities for goods (40%) and workers (15%). However, access to information and advisory services came out as a widespread constraint, with only a very small number of surveyed MSEs having access to such support.

#### Recommendations and proposed interventions:

As stated above, recent years saw the emergence of many initiatives led by international development agencies in support of the competitiveness of MSMEs in Lebanon. Besides the provision of business development services, micro financing, and capacity building (targeting mostly micro and small enterprises), many have undertaken substantive and quantitative studies about the work of MSMEs (e.g. Mercy Corps; ILO; UNDP; UNIDO; EU MEDA; among others). This has brought increasing knowledge about the sector, its needs, and dynamics, which in turn represents a facilitating factor for the development of improved approaches to the enhancement of MSMEs. But such new approaches need to reflect a gender element and fill the gaps identified above concerning women-led enterprises, including in USAID/Lebanon related projects, such as the Industry Value Chain Development (LIVCD) Project and Lebanon Investment in Micro Finance (LIM) Project.

The RFP for LIVCD project was in fact only recently issued and its activities are yet to begin. But the project is the continuation of 15 years of investment by USAID in the development of small enterprises particularly in the rural economy. As such it represents an opportunity to ensure the inclusion of gender perspective. In its current design, the LIVCD “will partner with the local private sector to develop select, fully functioning, competitive value chains in order to increase the incomes of the rural population as well as rural, peri-urban, and/or urban businesses, including, but not limited to, farmers, agro-processors, input suppliers, transporters, exporters, small businessmen, service providers, retailers, and other entities involved in rural wealth creation.” The RFP also states that the awardee is “expected to address approaches that attempt to maximize opportunities and minimize constraints to women across the chains with the ultimate aim of increasing their incomes.” In this respect, the project will aim to ensure that “approaches used to carry out interventions are tailored to women, and are aware of gender differences across the entire value chain. Examples of concerns to be addressed could include, but are not limited to,

increasing women's access to capital, control over income from value chain enterprises, increased decision making roles, and increased involvement at various levels of the selected value chains."

At this point no indicators are yet specified for this project, but a likely indicator will be the standard indicator GNDR2: "Proportion of female participants in USG-assisted programs designed to increase access to productive economic resources (assets, credit, income or employment)," and a custom indicator to compare the gender difference in the value of increased access to productive economic resources.

USAID/Lebanon could also consider the following proposed interventions towards meeting its stated goals in Lebanon:

*(1)Support the completion of studies and assessments of the specific needs of women across the MSMEs sector (not only in the micro enterprises as has been the practice) in the context of gender relations and social norms, to form the basis of support programs and services.*

Proposed indicators:

- Number of surveys and needs assessment studies focused on women in the MSMEs sector using USG assistance.
- The number of female-headed MSMEs receiving USG assistance composed of training, development of business plans, and access to finance.

*(2)Collaborate with Financial Institutions and micro-credit organizations focused on MSMEs to (a) provide them with targeted advice and (b) to build the technical capacities of men and women in the sector using gender sensitive tools. Both of these areas of collaboration should aim to enhance market competitiveness and possibilities for expansion of the participating MSMEs. Issues to consider in the training programs include the following: production technology; quality improvement; business planning and budgeting; innovative marketing strategies; new product development; bookkeeping and accounting; identification of credit sources and development of applications; and relevant legal and tax issues (including business registration and navigating the bureaucratic red tape).*

Proposed indicators:

- Number of men and women in financial institutions participating in training programs using USG assistance.
- Number of women-led Micro and Small Enterprises expanding into new markets using USG assistance.
- Number of enterprises transforming from micro to small to medium size using USG assistance (broken down by sex of the entrepreneur).

*(3)Supporting the advocacy, networking, and lobbying skills of men and women in the MSMEs through training and information sharing, to influence related business development regulations and advocate for reforms that would be more gender sensitive and more MSME friendly.*

Proposed indicators:

- Number of men and women participating in advocacy and lobbying training programs using USG assistance.
- Number of MSMEs that have joined business advocacy associations such as the Chamber of Commerce, Industry, and Agriculture, disaggregated by the sex of the MSME's owner (to be collected from CCIA records).

### *IR2.3 Increased access to finance for micro, small, and medium enterprises*

#### Priorities and constraints:

In Lebanon, traditional banking has chronically shunned small businesses. With their stringent credit requirements and demand for collaterals that most MSMEs do not have, banks have always tended to focus instead on macro financing, favoring large companies with solid capital. Some figures indicate that 1% of borrowers in Lebanon benefit from more than 50% of the total loans (Isaia, 2005). The Lebanese banking industry has been particularly inaccessible to women, with only 3% of bank loans going to female entrepreneurs (IFC, 2012). In recent years, some commercial banks began to offer small loan programs targeting specifically MSMEs. The majority of these programs require the enterprise to be registered and to provide evidence of property ownership (but without necessarily having to pledge it to the bank as a loan guarantee). Most women entrepreneurs are by definition excluded on both counts - the majority of them operate their small businesses in the informal sector; and the majority of them do not have any properties in their names. The very few programs that eliminated the property requirement came with inhibiting high interest rates.

In turn, the Lebanese government has taken a few measures to support financial access of MSMEs, including the initiation of a loan guarantees program -- Kafalat -- in partnership with some commercial banks. Kafalat is designed to help small and medium size enterprises by subsidizing guaranteed loans to the tune of 7% to ease the interest burden on the borrower and "to promote the integration of SMEs and start ups into the formal sector." The guarantee, issued based on the viability of the business project to be financed, is supposed to be a facilitating factor in the approval of the loans to be taken by the lending banks in lieu of a collateral (Kafalat Website). But Kafalat also has inherent problems that limit its potential to increase access to finance for MSMEs. For instance, while one of its main aims is to "ensure access to credit to finance sound investment projects, without having to provide any collateral requirement," the final decision (and the conditions) for granting the loan rests in the hands of the lending bank (Kafalat Website). In many cases, the banks still ask for asset collaterals and may refuse the loan before it even reaches Kafalat (Isaia, 2005). Moreover, the two principle obligations to submit a business plan or a feasibility plan (a skill that many women entrepreneurs do not have) and to be registered formally as a condition for a loan application (a requirement that most female-headed SMEs cannot meet) compromise the chances of the enterprises Kafalat is meant to support in first place.

Another financing system that seems to be potentially more accessible for MSMEs is microfinance. This system originates from the principle that making available (and easily) typically inaccessible credit to the un-bankable poor -- e.g. farmers, clothes makers, or street vendors -- would lead to capital accumulation, which in turn would help them escape poverty. Based on all available records, microfinance in Lebanon

has been developing quite slowly since its introduction in the 1990s despite the potential high level of demand in the country.<sup>13</sup> The most reliable figures indicate that Lebanon has 23 microfinance programs (Sanabel, 2010; p. 8), including those administered by commercial banks with subsidized interest rates and others sponsored by international development organizations. But the sector is highly concentrated in the hands of three major players covering 94% of the total market (Isaia, 2005b).

The majority of microfinance providers in Lebanon are structured as NGOs (with many providing funds on philanthropic rather development basis) and depend on grants from international entities, including USAID. Over the years, the attempts of some programs to raise funds commercially have met with legal and regulatory obstacles (Brandsma and Hart, 2008), keeping them in state of perpetual dependency.<sup>14</sup> Only two microcredit providers in Lebanon are registered as Microfinance Institutions (MFIs) regulated by the Central Bank, operating in partnership with Lebanese banks and/or a local foundation. But regardless of their legal structures and source of funding, microfinance providers have seen limited outreach to their target community. Available data on the number of active clients vary between 30,000 (Website of Emkan) and 53,759 (Sanabel, 2010; p. 5) - indicating a small proportion of a very large MSMEs sector with many unmet needs. Men and women are targeted by all microfinance providers, with some of them designing programs specifically for women entrepreneurs.<sup>15</sup> Based on a recent survey, women borrowers of the six key programs in Lebanon represent 21% to 57% of their total clients (Sanabel Industry Survey, 2008).

The following is an overview of the elements in the microfinance industry that undermine the access of female-owned MSMEs to quality financing resources despite the presence of minimal eligibility requirements - but it should be noted first that some of these elements affect both men and women, with the latter being more vulnerable due to bigger socio-cultural and legal strains on their economic activities:

*While many microcredit programs do specifically target women, very few of them are actively integrating gender issues into their services. They confuse working with women as contributing to achieve gender equality. As a result, short-term loans with quick repayment plans are directed at the establishment of micro enterprises concentrated in limited unproductive service sector activities that reflect and reproduce ascribed gender roles (Kerbage and Abdo, 2012; p. 75). Such approach limits the possibility of growth of female-headed MSMEs into more productive economic activities that could ultimately lead to more sustainable growth supportive of women's empowerment.*

*Related to the previous point is the general lack of sensitivity to socio-cultural issues and gender power dynamics, which give men in the family an upper hand in decision making especially on financial matters*

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<sup>13</sup> According to Sanabel Network (2010), there has been a variety of demand studies conducted over the last ten years by organizations such as the United Nations and the Central Administration for Statistics in Lebanon. Figures have varied depending on the estimation methodologies, reaching as high as 190,699 (International Finance Cooperation) and 182,930 (United Nations Capital Development Fund).

<sup>14</sup> Some argue, however, that the main constraint on the ability of microfinance to provide financial support to the MSMEs sector is not a lack of funds for on-lending but a lack of capacity to provide loans efficiently and sustainably (Brandsma and Hart, 2008).

<sup>15</sup> One such program was launched recently by the International Finance Cooperation of the World Bank Group. The Women in Business initiative aims to improve access to finance for smaller businesses in Lebanon owned by women entrepreneurs, through an agreement with BLC Bank ([www.ifc.org](http://www.ifc.org)).

*such as applying for loans.* MFIs having difficulties reaching women acknowledged this issue as main cause but nevertheless have not put in place a gender sensitive strategy to deal with such (common) problems.<sup>16</sup>

*Microcredit remains the main product of microfinance programs in Lebanon, which are yet to move into the provision of other financial products, such as savings and insurance schemes, that could provide both male and female beneficiaries long term security, especially in a crisis-prone country such as Lebanon.*

*Most programs offer loan amounts that are too small to make a significant difference in the productivity of MSMEs.* Their impact is limited to the provision of relief without any serious opportunities for expansion. This is exasperated by their higher-than-market interest rates, which often absorb significant portions of the ensuing income.

*Microfinance programs tend to lack a comprehensive approach towards the development of the badly-needed technical skills of men and women owners of MSMEs (especially in the informal sector).* This affects their abilities to manage and expand their businesses more efficiently, which in turn limit their access to finance (especially from commercial banks).

*Outreach to female business owners is also undermined by the difficulties microfinance lenders in Lebanon serving the MSMEs sector seem to face in recruiting female loan officers.*

*Recommendations and proposed interventions:*

USAID has been for long involved in initiatives designed to increase access to finance of MSMEs in Lebanon. Through its current program, Lebanon Investment in Microfinance (LIM), it provides technical and financial support to a large part of the microfinance sector in the country. As such, USAID/Lebanon is already in an advantageous position to affect a positive change in the financial abilities of women in the MSMEs sector, mainly through the inclusion of gender sensitive interventions in its planned and future activities. It is important, however, that any such interventions take into consideration not only differences in the respective needs and conditions of men and women, but also differences between the needs of women in medium-sized enterprises, at one end, and those of women in very small enterprises, at the other, both in the informal and formal sectors.

The following proposed interventions are advanced to be considered for implementation at three different levels -- USAID Implementing Partners; partner MFIs and microfinancing NGOs; women entrepreneurs. Together, these interventions are meant to contribute to the creation of an “enabling environment” for non-bank lenders as well as to increasing access to finance for the small and micro enterprise sector, especially those owned by women.

(1) At the level of USAID Implementing Partner:

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<sup>16</sup> One of the interviewees for this assessment from a Lebanese MFI reported about a woman owner of a small enterprise who just returned a loan check hours after receiving it because of the disapproval of her son.

*Sensitize IPs responsible for financing program on gender issues as they relate to MSMEs and build their capacities to be able to design gender sensitive products and training services to offer their partner MFIs and NGOs.*

Proposed indicators:

- Number of IPs offering gender sensitive products and training services with USG support.
- Number of gender mainstreaming training activities for IPs (disaggregated by sex and area of work) completed using USG support

(2) At the level of MFIs and microfinancing NGOs:

*(2a) Build the coordination, networking, and lobbying capacities of MFIs and microfinancing NGOs through specialized training ultimately leading to the creation of a national microfinance network focused on gaining more government support to the sector. The training program should be gender sensitive orienting the participating institutions on the needs of women entrepreneurs, whereas such needs will be automatically channeled into future lobbying activities and the agenda of the ensuing network.*

Proposed indicators:

- Number of MFI and microfinancing NGOs receiving specialized networking, organizational development, and lobbying training with USG support.
- Milestone for the establishment of national microfinance network by beneficiaries of USG assistance.
- Number of MFI and microfinancing NGOs which are members of a national microfinance network that seeks more government and private sector support for women entrepreneurs.

*(2b) Build the technical capacities of microfinancing organizations to increase their outreach skills to female-headed enterprises through training and orientation on available best practices and experiences.*

Proposed indicators:

- Number of microfinance organizations trained in outreach skills servicing female headed enterprises with USG assistance
- Percent change in female entrepreneurs benefitting from the support of lending organization using USG assistance.

*(2c) Support the completion of a gender assessment study of MFIs and microfinancing programs in Lebanon to identify gaps in their approach to reaching out to women entrepreneurs. As a second step, work with relevant MFIs and programs to implement the findings of the study.*

Proposed indicator:

- Change in the number of women beneficiaries of MFIs and programs receiving USG assistance, based on the gaps identified in the assessment.

(3) At the level of women entrepreneurs:

*(3a) Provide training to men and women entrepreneurs to build their technical skills on issues that would improve their abilities to access loans and manage them. Topics to be covered in the training to include: preparation of business and feasibility plans; business budgeting; and business management.*

Proposed indicators:

- Number of training events aimed at improving ability to access and manage loans for men and women entrepreneurs organized with USG assistance.
- Number of male and female trainees in loan access and management workshops organized with USG assistance.
- Comparative percentage difference in the number of approved loan applications for trained versus untrained men and women entrepreneurs.
- Number of non-traditional business proposals submitted by women beneficiaries (e.g., movement away from informal sector, retail, sewing and cooking enterprises to small scale processing and services).

*(3b) Support the completion of market research and feasibility studies aimed at increasing the productivity of women entrepreneurs and understanding the needs of women-owned businesses. Findings to be shared with beneficiaries and to be integrated in training programs targeting women in the MSMEs sector.*

Proposed indicator:

- Number of market research and feasibility studies conducted in support of women entrepreneurs using USG assistance.

#### **IV. USAID PROGRAMMING AND IMPLEMENTATION STRUCTURES - ANALYSIS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

This Section concludes the gender assessment exercise with a brief look at the programming and implementation structures of USAID/Lebanon, with the aim of providing some observations on gender mainstreaming needs within the Mission. The analysis draws on information collected during interviews with program staff and one Implementing Partner (PMPL), and on a desk review of project documents made available to the assessment team. It should be noted that this review did not entail a thorough and exhaustive assessment of the gender-related structure of the USAID program in Lebanon. Nor do the recommendations presented below represent a comprehensive restructuring of the current program of activities. They are rather suggested to complement the proposed recommendations and interventions presented above as part of each of the seven IRs.

The following issues were noted concerning the Mission staff, the IPs, and the overall program under implementation:



- Interviewed staff generally indicated an open attitude concerning gender issues and gender mainstreaming. It was clear, however, that “gender” does not constitute an essential element in their work.
- None of the Mission staff have received gender-related training as part of their work for USAID, except for one who only recently participated in a four-day training workshop on gender organized in connection with the recent release of USAID Gender Policy. Her participation in this training was following her (informal) designation by the Program Director as the Mission’s “point of contact on gender.” This designation was a de facto progression from her general interest in gender issues and previous ad hoc tasks she was given to respond to some gender related requests outside the parameters of actual projects. At the time of conducting the present assessment, the “gender point of contact” did not have clear function or responsibilities in this capacity.
- Reporting from IPs on the activities of some of the projects generally entails the provision of data desegregated by sex. In addition, the bi-annual Performance Annual Plan requires the office as a whole to include information on gender as part of its progress of work. Despite the presence of such requirements, gender does not seem to be systematically mainstreamed throughout the program. The data provided is often quantitative and does not allow for a qualitative understanding of the impact of USAID-supported activities on gender equality and women’s empowerment.
- There has been a recent infusion of a gender element in the monitoring of USAID activities in Lebanon through the work of the LPMP project responsible for helping USAID/Lebanon carry out its performance monitoring and validation. The gender sensitive profile and experience of the project staff has been facilitating the introduction of a gender element in the implementation of other projects (including a recent inclusion of a gender orientation session in training workshop for all IPs of USAID/Lebanon).

#### Recommendations:

- Establish clear accountability structure on gender issues for the whole USAID/Lebanon office as well as within each USAID project under implementation. Within the office, there is a need to capitalize on the interest and recently acquired knowledge of the (informally) designated “gender point of contact” and formalize her designation into a “Gender Focal Point” with clear function and responsibilities. The GFP should become a resource person for the Mission staff and the IPs on all matters related to gender issues, including the application of the USAID Gender Policy or gender mainstreaming and their integration into the overall program of USAID. To this end, the GFP should receive ongoing capacity building and updating of knowledge on tools and standards related to gender mainstreaming, to be transmitted systematically to the other Mission staff.
- It is highly advisable to support the role of the GFP with an earmarked office budget for gender to cover training, documentation, and participation in related events.

- Provide training for all Mission staff and IPs on “USAID Guide to Gender Integration and Analysis” and sensitize them on the principles of gender mainstreaming and women’s empowerment.
- Undertake systematic integration of gender mainstreaming in all stages of Program planning, with clear gender sensitive indicators and Monitoring and Evaluation methodologies to be utilized by the IPs.
- At the level of IPs and partner organization, introduce gender-sensitive requirements for the selection of partners, implementation process, and reporting on results - all supported with clear tools and realistic expectations on gender mainstreaming.
- Establish links with a State Department program focused on the Lebanese Internal Security Force (ISF) that is currently under implementation by the US Embassy in Lebanon (but falls outside the responsibility of USAID). The ISF program aims at “producing a police force that is publicly trusted, professionally trained, understands the importance of professional policing principles and human rights, and utilizes these principles and skills in its daily police work” through the provision of training workshops. As such it represents an excellent opportunity for the Mission to bring a gender perspective into the work of the ISF, especially in its handling of complaints about GBV, sexual harassment, violence against migrant domestic workers, and in its dealings with women prisoners and under custody. It would be especially beneficial if USAID/ Lebanon evaluated the whole ISF training program from a gender perspective and integrated based on the findings gender-focused components throughout the curriculum.

## V. CONCLUSION

Despite many advantages and acquired rights, Lebanese women continue to face discrimination at many levels, keeping gender equality in Lebanon an elusive objective. This gender assessment identified the structural constraints that carry the seeds of discrimination and women’s vulnerability, as rooted in laws and regulations, sectarian dynamics, socio-cultural values, decision making structures, and public policies and development strategies. USAID stands to play an important role in bringing about fundamental changes in Lebanese women’s status and gender relations. An examination of the seven different Intermediate Results associated with USAID’s Development Objectives in Lebanon identified factors that would facilitate the possibility of these changes. Through its set of projects that cover a wide range of issues critical to the development of the Lebanese economy and society as a whole, USAID’s work can affect improvement in mentalities, in representations, in values, in laws, and in conditions that would ultimately lead to equality and empowerment for all, men and women, boys and girls. But the success of these projects in reaching this objective depends on structural gender mainstreaming in all stages of design, planning, implementation, and evaluation of program activities. It requires interventions focused on capacity building, knowledge formation, networking, access to resources, awareness campaigns, and lobbying for legal reforms, among many. Most importantly, it requires active partnerships and collaboration with all relevant stakeholders, including state institutions, the private

sector, the media, civil society, and the wider international development community operating in Lebanon.

## ANNEXES

### ANNEX 1. BIBLIOGRAPHY OF REFERENCES CITED AND CONSULTED

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## **ANNEX 2. PERSONS CONSULTED**

The assessment team would like to thank each of the following individuals for their most valuable information and time:

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## **ANNEX 3. STATEMENT OF WORK**

### **Statement of Work for Gender Consultant**

#### **USAID/Lebanon Gender Analysis**

#### **PERFORMANCE PERIOD**

April –June 2012

#### **BACKGROUND**

The United States Agency for International Development Mission for Lebanon is preparing to develop a new a Country Development Cooperation Strategy (CDCS). The CDCS is a USAID-wide strategic initiative that seeks to leverage long-term planning and careful analysis to maximize development resources. The current USAID/Lebanon focus areas are: Democracy and Governance, Education, Economic Growth, and Water. Based upon consultations held to date with USAID/Washington and Department of State, USAID/Lebanon's preliminary vision of the results framework for its new CDCS is as follows:

Preliminary CDCS Goal: Improved accountability and credibility of public institutions and broader economic prosperity

Preliminary Development Objectives and Intermediate Results:

1. Improved capacity of the public sector in providing transparent, quality services across Lebanon.
  - IR1.1 Improved public basic education for all in Lebanon
  - IR1.2 Improved water services for all in Lebanon
  - IR1.3 Improved governance initiative, quality and transparency in service delivery
  - IR1.4 Strengthened civil society's ability to create a stronger civic culture and more democratic governance
2. Enhanced economic opportunity for the poorest segments of Lebanese society, particularly in areas outside metro Beirut
  - IR2.1 Increased job readiness through secondary and post-secondary education
  - IR2.2 Reduced poverty through enhanced competitiveness that expands micro, small, and medium-sized enterprise growth.
  - IR2.3 Increased access to finance for micro, small and medium enterprises

The CDCS is intended to articulate country-specific development hypotheses and set forth the goal, objectives, results, indicators, and resource levels that guide Project Design, Implementation, Evaluation, and Performance Management, and informs annual planning and reporting processes. The CDCS must reflect Agency Policies and Strategies and also should incorporate priorities and input from key

stakeholders, including host country governments, local civil societies, private sector organizations, the State Department, the broader USG interagency and other donors. As required by USAID policy, the development of the CDCS must be informed by a gender analysis of the technical areas of the Mission's portfolio. An issue still under discussion between the mission and the USAID/Washington Middle East Bureau is whether a three-year timeline (FY 2013-2015) would make the most sense, rather than a five-year planning period (FY 2013-2018) that could be politically obsolete within a few months or years. A three-year CDCS would need to conform to USAID's Transition Strategy Guidance which requires explicit reference to two or more strategic planning scenarios based on analysis of the evolving country (or sub-national area) context with specific triggers or indicators that define a shift from one scenario to another.

Gender analysis is the systematic gathering and analysis of information to identify and understand the roles, divisions of labor, resources, constraints, needs, opportunities/capacities, and interests of men and women (and girls and boys) in a given context. Gender analysis is required by the ADS in the design of country strategic plans, activities/projects, and must be reflected in associated activity approval documents, SOWs and RFAs/RFPs. The analysis should also look at other cross-cutting issues, such as gender-based violence and women's leadership.

As USAID policies require that gender considerations be incorporated in all stages of strategic planning, program design, implementation and monitoring, and in all of USAID solicitations (ADS 201, 203, 302 and 303). Currently USAID/Lebanon is in the process of formulating its Development Objectives (DO) Results Framework to reflect the key role of gender considerations in the achievement of the objectives.

In developing the new Results Frameworks USAID/Lebanon seeks to conduct a gender assessment to cover the two key questions guiding USAID's approach to gender analysis:

- How will gender relations affect the achievement of sustainable results?
- How will expected results affect the relative status of men and women?

The Mission seeks a review of available gender-related information to summarize the overall situation of men and women in Lebanon, to examine how the overall situation is reflected in the Development Objectives (DO), Intermediate Results (IR) and indicators and in which areas of USAID/Mission activities gender is an important influence on expected results. In cases where gender is found to be an important influence on objectives and results, recommendations are sought on how to reflect it appropriately in respective DO narratives, and IRs and in planning for new activities to address them appropriately in their respective designs.

## OBJECTIVES AND PURPOSE OF THE ASSIGNMENT

The purpose of the gender analysis is to identify the key gender inequalities in Lebanon in order to inform USAID/Lebanon strategic planning and program implementation. This analysis should identify the gaps between males and females as they relate to the technical areas identified above and, more specifically, those areas highlighted during initial consultation discussions with USAID/Lebanon. As importantly, the analysis should include concrete recommendations on ways to mitigate gender inequality that can be integrated into USAID/Lebanon's DOs, IRs and sub-IRs, Results Framework, Monitoring and Evaluation, and Indicators. The Scope of Work for this analysis is being procured with the belief that a full, complete and up-to-date analysis of constraints to gender equality in those areas where USAID/Lebanon works will result in more sustainable development outcomes and more effective use of funding.

To help the Mission realize these objectives a gender analysis should address the following objectives:

- Analyze the existing program portfolio, outlining the main areas where gender inequality issues are of greatest concern. This analysis should draw context from past analysis published on the region within the last three years by governments, other bilateral and multilateral donors, by research and policy institutions or by implementing partners, but should focus on applying this information to USAID/Lebanon's stated areas of interest.<sup>17</sup>
- Identify the gender-based constraints to and opportunities for equitable participation and access of men and boys and women and girls in planned USAID/Lebanon programs, services, and policy initiatives. This analysis should also outline possible differences in the impact of USAID/Lebanon programming on males and females and identify approaches that USAID/Lebanon can use to better integrate gender considerations into its current programming and into its CDCS and future activities.
- Identify successful examples of gender equality and female empowerment in the country or region to look for lessons learned that could be built on by USAID/Lebanon programs.
- Outline significant gender issues that need to be addressed at strategic level for a broad range of USAID/Lebanon technical areas and recommend interventions at program level (sub-IR).
- Identify those gender issues for which USAID/Lebanon possesses a comparative advantage to address, which includes mapping of other major donors' gender strategies in the region. This portion of the analysis will allow USAID/Lebanon to prioritize resources dedicated to specific gender-related constraints and thereby maximize impact on the region's economic and social development.
- Work with Mission Gender focal point to develop CDCS gender's indicators and M&E framework.

## APPROACH & METHODOLOGY

The duties and responsibilities of the consultant will be as follows:

1. Establish working relationship and coordination process with USAID/Asia Bureau's Gender and Youth Senior Specialist (GYSS), Dr. Kai Spratt ([kspratt@usaid.gov](mailto:kspratt@usaid.gov)), who will be working virtually from Washington DC with Consultant, and with USAID/Lebanon Program Office who will be backstopping this SOW.
2. Coordinate with GYSS to identify reliable and credible documents to include in a desk review related to gender inequality and female empowerment in Lebanon. Document review should include but not be limited to:
  - USAID documents, including but not limited to existing USAID/Lebanon documents, annual reports, Performance Monitoring Plans, program descriptions, sector analysis, and evaluations;

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<sup>17</sup> Based on initial meetings with USAID the analysis was to be forward looking focusing on the gender issues relevant to the IRs identified in the Mission CDCS.

- Studies conducted by other donors (including the World Bank, UNDP Regional Office, and ESCAP), non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and the academic community, including the WEF Global Gender Gap report, the World Bank's World Development Report 2012 and Human Development Report 2012.
- 3. Analyze each DO, IR and indicator preliminarily proposed for the new Results Framework for from gender perspective to assess whether gender has or has not an important influence on them, and substantiate findings with empirical data. Potential data sources can be related project activities currently in effect;
- 4. Suggested approach in conducting this gender analysis is the one proposed by the United Nations Development Programme:  
(1) Sex-Disaggregated Data + (2) Analysis + (3) Gender Perspective = Gender Analysis  
  
Suggested dimensions of the analysis are:
  - Analysis of sex-disaggregated data and information
  - Assessment of roles and responsibilities/division of labor
  - Consideration of access to and control over resources
  - Examination of patterns of decision-making
  - Examination of the data using a gender perspective (i.e. the context of women and men's gender roles and relationships)
- 5. Produce a summary document, in collaboration with GYSS, highlighting the gender gaps in the sectors within which USAID/Lebanon programs activities. The consultant will be responsible 1) authoring sections of the summary documents as requested by GYSS and Mission Program Office and 2) for producing a bibliography of source documents consulted, which will be included as an annex in the final Gender Analysis report.
- 6. As per guidance from USAID/Lebanon the Consultant will conduct discussions and interviews with staff from USAID/Lebanon, US Embassy, bilateral government counterparts (women's machineries such as Women's Union Department of Gender Equity,) and other bilateral and multilateral organizations, and NGOs active in gender-related areas in Lebanon. If it is deemed appropriate and feasible, the team may also conduct interviews with direct beneficiaries of current USAID/Lebanon programs. The consultant, in collaboration with USAID/Lebanon will be expected to develop a list of key contacts (based on the illustrative list provided in Annex I) and provide the list to USAID/Lebanon for review and feedback prior to doing interviews.
- 7. Interview Mission Program Office to obtain information on mission M&E policy.
- 8. A one-day mission-wide presentation of the gender analysis and recommendations for gender integration within the CDCS to the Mission to obtain feedback from staff and incorporate revisions into the final gender analysis report; this may or may not be done at the Mission with the GYSS depending on Mission preference .
- 9. Exit briefings with PDO, Office Directors, and Mission Director, if requested.

## Deliverables and Criteria

1. Work plan/schedule and list of proposed documents to be reviewed be due within three (3) working days of the commencement of activities. The Program Office will approve the work plan within two (2) working days of receipt.
2. Draft Gender Analysis Report (between 20-30 pages<sup>18</sup> not including annexes and including an executive summary) that compiles finding from literature review and key informant interviews, focus groups and USAID/Lebanon discussion. A draft of the report will be submitted to USAID/Lebanon for internal reviews. The Report will succinctly describe:
  - The most relevant gender inequality and female empowerment issues within the region related to USAID/Lebanon's current and future strategic plan and program portfolio.
  - An analysis of the most binding constraints to promoting gender equality in the region, including additional analysis on how these constraints may vary from other countries in the sub-region.
  - Specific and significant gender issues that needs to be addressed at strategic level for a broad range of USAID/Lebanon technical areas, including health, democracy and governance, higher education, and economic growth based on the mandatory analysis of gender issues
  - Specific recommendations on how USAID/Lebanon can better address these gender-related gaps and incorporate gender equality and women's empowerment objectives into its programs at various stages of the project cycle.
  - Up-to-date analysis on other donors' work on gender equality, and specific recommendations on how USAID/Lebanon can leverage its own comparative advantage to maximize the impact of this collective work.
  - A bibliography of sources consulted, including interviews, focus groups, and any other data collection method.
3. PowerPoint presentation on Gender Analysis findings and recommendations for Mission-wide presentation (submitted to Mission at least 2 days prior to presentation).
4. Draft mission Gender M&E framework with indicators. The final Gender Analysis Report will be due to USAID/Lebanon within ten (10) working days of receiving Mission comments on the draft report. In order to be deemed acceptable, the final report must include all of the elements listed above for the draft analysis report. In addition, the analysis team must adequately address all significant comments raised by USAID/Lebanon during review of the draft report. The final approved report will be a public document to be submitted to the Development Experience Clearinghouse ([www.dec.org](http://www.dec.org)) following the required Office of GenDev format (see Annex C). Upon approval, the USAID/Lebanon GDO will be responsible for submitting the report to the DEC.

LEVEL OF EFFORT: Up to 35 days.

## TEAM COMPOSITION

Two consultants, preferably located in Lebanon, will work in collaboration with a 2-member team from USAID/Washington and USAID/Lebanon. The Consultants should possess significant knowledge on gender integration in developing countries with specific expertise in Lebanon.

The Consultants should possess the following skills and qualifications:

- Demonstrated record of work on gender, women's rights, gender analysis, and gender policies;

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<sup>18</sup> Based on a review of the first draft of the Gender Assessment a longer document was acceptable that focused on the CDCS IRs.

- Expertise in one or more of the core technical areas in which USAID/Lebanon conducts programming: Education, Democracy and Governance, Economic Growth and Water;
- Familiarity with USAID's gender policy and program cycle, ADS regulations on gender integration and USAID required gender indicators;
- Deep knowledge of gender issues in Lebanon especially in the context of development programs;
- Excellent English writing and editing skills, as well as an ability to take information from a wide variety of sources and draft high level, organized analysis and reports for dissemination;
- Ability to translate analysis into actionable strategic and operational recommendations, consistent with USAID Policies and directives.

## MANAGEMENT

The gender analysis efforts will be led by the Program Office, in consultation with the Mission Gender POC. The USAID/Washington Asia and Middle East Bureaus Gender and Youth Senior Specialist (GYSS) will provide suggesting documents for review and analysis, may participate on a TDY to support the gender analysis process and/or Mission wide presentation of findings, and/or review the draft Gender Analysis report and offer comments and suggestions. Throughout the data collection and report-writing process, the USAID/Lebanon Program Office will be the main point of contact for the consultant. In this role, the Program Office will help arrange meetings with USAID/Lebanon staff and related stakeholders as appropriate. USAID/Lebanon staff may join these meetings as desired.

The Consultants will work with the Program Office to schedule an in-briefing to USAID/Lebanon staff, if requested, prior to commencing the work, and will provide debriefings on a schedule determined by the GDO.

## LOGISTICS

USAID/Lebanon Program Office/Gender POC will provide overall direction to the Consultant to provide key USAID documents and background materials for reading, and help arrange any in-briefing and debriefings within the Mission. Desk review of research and other resources on gender in the region can be done off-site and the report may be completed off-site, but consultant must be available for in-person or video conferencing for the one-day mission wide presentation of the analysis findings and recommendations. The Consultant must be available in-person or by video conference after submission of both the draft and final reports in the event additional questions or clarifications are forthcoming from the Mission.

## QUALITY CONTROL

The Performance Management Program for Lebanon (PMPL) project, contract number RAN-I-00-09-00019, is responsible for recruiting the consultants and ensuring oversight and quality control of the deliverables mentioned under (1) above that they produce.



## DRAFT TEMPLATE FOR A COUNTRY GENDER ANALYSIS REPORT

The gender analysis should be forward- looking, combining socio- economic and demographic regional analysis from a gender perspective with the scope and aims of the Mission's anticipated strategic direction, which will guide its work going forward.

### SECTIONS

**Executive Summary:** Should outline the key findings from the analysis and focus on the recommendations for USAID/Lebanon to more effectively address gender-related constraints in the region.

### Acknowledgements

### Acronyms

#### 1. Introduction

The context of gender equality and women's empowerment (leadership, participation) in the USAID/Lebanon region:

An overview of the significant gender issues for Lebanon in those technical areas identified through consultations with USAID/Lebanon technical teams and office leadership, using macro gender indicators to highlight the issues in each of these sectors. Also, touch briefly on the policy framework throughout the region that is important for helping USAID/Lebanon to achieve its objectives on gender equality/women's empowerment.

#### 2. USAID Mission Strategic Priorities and Associated Gender Analysis

Again, it is important to note that the priorities mentioned below correspond to USAID/Lebanon's current program portfolio. Initial consultations will allow the analysis team to more effectively target analysis to those areas in which USAID/Lebanon will focus future programming.

- Strengthen the public sector's ability to provide quality services that foster growth for its citizens
- Enhance economic opportunity for people living in the Lebanon's poorest regions, particularly rural areas.

#### For each sector identified during consultations:

(i) USAID/Lebanon's strategic priorities for the sector, together with a discussion of alignment with overall USAID priorities.

(ii) Provide detail on the gender constraints/disparities as they relate to the strategic priorities identified in (i) above. **Be specific about the gender gap(s) to be reduced.**

(iii) Identify opportunities for redressing gender gaps in each strategic priority. Identify opportunities to promote leadership of women within each strategic priority.

(iv) Discuss best or promising practices to address gender constraints/disparities and opportunities, based on:

- a) Prior evaluations, with emphasis on evaluations that have used a rigorously defined counterfactual to isolate impact;
- b) Evidence from scalable or replicable projects with measurable/demonstrable results;

c) Other indicators of promise to produce demonstrable results. This may include government, other donor, civil society, or regional evaluations or activities that have been examined for positive results.

(v) Provide recommendations (summary statement, followed by more detail), bounded by office priorities identified in Section 2 above. Drawing from the analysis, identify:

- Potential results (and associated indicators) that could be incorporated into program planning and activity design.
- Potential supporting strategies and national resources, including activities or initiatives by other donors, host country government institutions, and civil society groups, and any potential areas of collaboration or partnership.
- Potential for specific activities, as related to gender equality in the country program and the possible need to target particular issues relating to gender equality and women's empowerment.
- Resources required to strengthen the gender equality dimensions of the country program, including human resources, training needs, and additional planning/design tools.
- Anticipated areas of resistance or constraints, and how to cope with such.

#### **4. Integrating Gender Equality Results into a Mission Results Framework**

Provide illustrative indicators to measure the progress and impact on the gender constraints/disparities identified for each sector above that the Mission can incorporate into its overall Results Framework.

#### **5. Illustrative Implementation Plan**

Propose illustrative steps for the Mission to implement the results of the country gender analysis into its strategic plan (CDCS), including steps to build the Mission's capacity to address gender equality and women's empowerment.

#### **6. Conclusions**

#### **7. Annexes**

- Bibliography
- Basic concepts
- Scope of Work
- Methodology
- Gender analysis team
- List of key informants
- Main Findings, relevant recommendations and final conclusions
- Three recommendations from the gender assessment proposed for adoption as step one in the gender integration

## ANNEX 4: SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS AND PROPOSED INTERVENTIONS

### **IR1.1 Improved public basic education for all citizens**

#### **Main Findings:**

- The public education sector is marked by inefficient bureaucracy, limited public financing, political interference, and the inability of the Government to delineate a strategic vision for education, in general, and for higher education, in particular.
- Compulsory free education is yet to be enforced and students with special needs continue to be largely excluded from public schools.
- A recent study indicates that an average of over 30% of women with university education and an average of 40% of women who have completed secondary education believe that, a) men are better political leaders than women, and b) in case of job scarcity men should have more right to a job than women.
- Public education in Lebanon has been for long overshadowed by the large number of private institutions, which absorb as much as 70% of elementary students, 60% of intermediate students, and 50% of secondary students.
- Public education is the first (and often only) choice for poor families, especially in rural areas, when it comes to their daughters.
- There is only one public higher education institution in the country, the Lebanese University (LU), competing with 37 better equipped and mostly more qualified private institutions graduating 55% of the Lebanese student body. Available figures indicate that women account for 70% of LU graduates.
- The public and private systems of education function rather independently of one another and as such, the public sector is deprived of any possible trickle down effects from the private sector.

#### **Main Recommendations:**

- Build on the findings of a recent study on the state of Lebanese public schools to (a) prepare and inform periodic qualitative studies on issues such as causes of drop-out and repetition among girls and boys, and (b) organize gender sensitive training activities for teachers to increase their capacities to deal with this problem.

- Support the design and implementation of a gender sensitive program that provides guidance on, and preparation for, university education, including the selection of non-traditional majors both for female and male students.
- Provide support to gender sensitive cooperation initiatives and program linkages between public and private schools (including those in the VTE sector), with the support of media outlets and the private sector.
- Provide support for the development of a ‘women’s empowerment in education index’.
- Support the development of integration programs for children with special needs in USAID rehabilitated schools focusing particularly on female students. The programs should be based on a research component to identify the number (by sex) of school aged children with special needs, their gender specific educational and social needs, and lessons learned from actual integration programs in the country (if any) and elsewhere.
- Support collaboration initiatives between the Lebanese University and the main private universities targeting specifically female students and faculty, towards the provision of gender sensitive faculty development opportunities (e.g. intensive summer seminars, research residencies, joint panel discussions, national symposia), availability of scholarships for LU and VTE female students (especially in non-traditional fields), and the establishment of student exchange programs which would benefit women and men equally.

### **IR1.2 Improved water services for all in Lebanon**

#### **Main Findings:**

- The tendency in the country has been to neglect women in most water sector reforms aimed at curtailing water problems and advancing a sustainable system of integrated water resources management (IWRM). These reforms have treated issues such as water conservation, potable water quality, and service delivery in a gender blind or, at best, a gender neutral approach, without any acknowledgement of the differences between men and women when it comes to both causes and effects of water shortage
- The water related projects of international agencies operating in Lebanon, including USAID and UNDP, are largely focused on gender neutral institutional capacity building and infrastructure development.
- There is an urgent need for (a) national gender disaggregated data on water usage and (b) in-depth research on gender and water across regions. The deficiency in gender related data is predominant in the overall field of agriculture, where women are estimated to comprise over 40% of the labor force.

- The gender blind approach to water management overlooks prevalent Lebanese cultural definitions of cleanliness, which result in over-usage of water and detergents, leading to difficulties in conserving waste water and undermining the possibility of its reuse as a secondary source for irrigation.
- There is a widespread lack of gender awareness among top administrators, men and women alike, at the Ministry of Energy and Water, along with an absence of political will and effective mechanisms within the relevant ministries to mainstream gender issues in water related policies. The Gender Focal Point at MEW has little authority and does not enjoy any access to decision making circles.
- The “Lebanese National Observatory for Women in Agriculture and Rural Areas” (NOWARA) provides a solid base to reach out to rural women (especially through its system of appointed Regional Coordinators) and to potentially bring women’s role in water management to the forefront.

#### **Main recommendations:**

- Support women’s centers and relevant NGOs to conduct in-depth research and disaggregated data collection on gender and water in Lebanon.
- Build on the success of a recent awareness campaign conducted as part of LWSS to develop a new campaign focused on women’s key role in water conservation. Such a campaign should be planned in cooperation with relevant NGOs and UN agencies, municipalities, the private sector, local water councils, and Regional Water Establishments and could focus on issues such as “water contamination and family health”, “responsible usage of water for household cleaning,” and “overuse of detergents and chemical products in household cleaning.” Parallel to this awareness campaign LWSS could use its current outreach events at schools to also underscore the important contribution of women to water conservation and integrating it in its training agenda.
- Provide assistance to the National Council for Lebanese Women to produce and implement gender sensitive sector training for GFPs at water related ministries (i.e. Agriculture, Environment, and Social Affairs) as well as for relevant personnel at agriculture cooperatives and the Regional Water Establishments.
- Cooperate with NOWARA to reach out to rural women both directly and through NOWARA’s Regional Coordinators to train them on better approaches to water usage within the agriculture sector.

#### **IR1.3 Improved governance initiative in service delivery**

## **Main Findings:**

- The Lebanese political culture and its inherent conflictual, patriarchal, sectarian, and family-based characteristics precludes the development of accountability in service delivery and enhances instead a patronage system of state-society relations.
- Lebanese women are not able to detach themselves from the prevalent sectarian and “clientist” political culture, even with the recognition of its being a major obstacle to the realization of their full rights as citizens. Adherence to this culture and failure to transcend confessional boundaries undermine the possibility of cooperation between women’s groups and their ability to form a critical mass capable of influencing political decision making in the country.
- Current electoral laws with stringent requirements based on “the place of birth” rather than “the place of residence” result in low level of community involvement and participation across the country, especially among women.
- Municipal electoral battles are still waged along traditional family and tribal lines rather than on the basis of electoral programs - the more intense the battles are, the more prevalent the perception of women’s incapability to successfully participate and compete. Female residents are more likely than men to have neither the incentives nor the support to get involved in local politics and community affairs.
- There is a prevalent “victim culture” among Lebanese men and women alike with a predominant ignorance of citizens’ rights and of the duties of civil servants and politicians.

## **Main recommendations:**

- Support the establishment of specialized local community committees (or shadow municipal committees) with equal male female participation to aid municipalities in the various aspects of their work, especially in identifying and responding to community needs. Cooperation between local governments and these committees would contribute to social cohesion, psychological ownership of adopted policies and projects, and more responsive services (especially sensitive to the needs of women).
- Build on the findings and lessons learned of an assessment previously completed as part of the NDI Shariky project to build the capacities of women and young candidates to run for elections.
- Support through training, studies, surveys, and campaigns the development of a gender sensitive governance culture rooted in citizens’ knowledge of their duties and rights, in their capacities to exercise and protect those rights, and in their abilities to hold those who breach such rights accountable.

**IR1.4 Strengthened civil society's ability to create a stronger civic culture and more democratic governance**

**Main Findings:**

- Lebanon enjoys a large civil society engaged in the provision of much-needed social and educational services and in pushing for an agenda of sociopolitical change. However, a large number of NGOs are focused on philanthropic and charitable giving rooted in sectarian affiliations, without a development dimension to their work.
- Civil Society in Lebanon operates outside the framework of a well-defined development strategy and a unified vision for women's empowerment.
- While a large number of CSOs in Lebanon target women and include gender issues as (direct or indirect) focus areas on their agendas, only a few have a clear understanding of basic concepts related to gender, gender mainstreaming, and female empowerment.
- A general lack of a "culture of gender equality" coupled with poor knowledge of necessary empowerment and mainstreaming tools within civil society result in the confusion of "women's issues" with "gender issues", and in the predominance of weak women specific projects that address their needs in isolation from the overall social, economic, and political national context.
- The absence of effective knowledge sharing mechanisms and weak staff retention in most CSOs restrict trickle-down effects within organizations and keep knowledge (including on gender issues) at an individualistic (rather than organizational) level.
- In most CSOs (and the Lebanese society at large), there is lack of awareness of the connection between gender inequality, on the one hand, and issues such as poverty, human rights, and sustainable development, on the other. As a result, women's empowerment and gender relations are often neglected and treated as secondary (rather than an essential element) to such issues deemed as priorities by many organizations.
- Weak cooperation and coordination among NGOs (including among women's organizations) have undermined the ability of civil society on the whole to turn "gender issues" into "national issues". It has also resulted in duplication of efforts and waste of resources.
- Lack of interest among most funding institutions to forge cooperation within civil society coupled with ongoing limitation of resources have enhanced unproductive competition between NGOs.
- Weak evidence-based research and knowledge sharing structures on women and gender issues have undermined the abilities of CSOs to spark informed public debates on pressing matters and to

substantiate their advocacy initiatives convincingly. Most funded research is part of time bound “activities” tied to specific projects (rather than established programs).

- CSOs in Lebanon are yet to fully benefit from the power of the media and modern communication technologies to put forward women’s issues on the official agenda and in the public mind. Due to financial and technological limitations advocacy campaigns as a strategy for social change continue to be quite weak across civil society. In the meanwhile, media channels are used instead to enhance stereotypical images and harmful representations of women and gender relations rather than their elimination.

### **Main recommendations:**

- Build through intensive programs of training the technical capacities of CSOs in the areas of gender mainstreaming, gender assessment, and gender programming (Gender Literacy) regardless of their mandate and open to all their staff, not only the Gender Focal Points. Including a knowledge-transfer component (with measurable output / outcome indicators) in such initiative would ensure long term continuity of commitment and information within organizations.
- Support substantive and evidence-based research on women and gender relations in Lebanon, especially on topics with linkages between gender empowerment and other priority issues in the country (e.g. good governance, poverty, transparency, political participation, human rights, etc.).
- Support the financial and human resource capacities of CSOs to design and implement collaboratively effective advocacy and outreach campaigns on issues related to women’s rights and female empowerment, especially GBV, sexual harassment, and women’s economic and legal rights.
- Support the development of research and training programs on the concept and tools of “gender budgeting” to be advocated for implementation in Lebanon at macro and micro levels, drawing on available best practices.
- Support the development of a program on “gender legal literacy” to strengthen the skills of relevant CSOs and the media to be able to identify gender discrimination gaps in existing laws, to lobby the legal establishment to eliminate such gaps, and to sensitize the public at large on women’s legal rights. The program should include training for judges to increase their knowledge of international conventions related to female empowerment (such as CEDAW) to be implemented in collaboration with NGOs focused on women and gender issues (e.g. pioneer CSOs such as KAFA).
- Support relevant CSOs aiming to establish accessible and “secular” regional shelters for abused women (including female migrant workers), with specialized personnel well informed about human rights and gender equality principles.



### **IR2.1 Increased job readiness through secondary and post-secondary education**

#### **Main Findings:**

- Many of the serious challenges related to enhancing economic opportunities for the Lebanese, in general, and for women (especially those living in poor rural areas), in particular, emanate from the absence of human development policy.
- There is a lack of effective gender sensitive career guidance framework within the Lebanese education system.
- A general preference for higher academic education at the expense of vocational and technical education has been a factor in limiting career choices and undermining job readiness.
- Specialization choices for women reveal the same trend dominating academic higher education institutions, keeping their numbers significantly low in traditionally male dominated fields.
- Both the academic higher education system and the VTE sector do not systematically respond to market needs in a manner that increases the job readiness of male and female graduating students.

#### **Main recommendations:**

- Extend the scope of USAP (which provides merit based-scholarships to public school students to attend higher quality American educational institutions in the country) to include female students from the public VTE sector as well, especially to those interested in male dominated majors.
- Support the establishment of a national institute for career guidance (with regional branches) to provide effective gender-sensitive services to students across the country (possibly as part of the BALADI project).
- Support the involvement of parents and parents' associations in gender sensitive career guidance programs.
- Support the establishment of regional centers of competence to enhance the quality of Vocational and Technical Education and to infuse its programs with an inclusive gender sensitive approach supportive of increasing women's entry into male dominated fields.
- Support collaborative initiatives between the media and the VTE sector to promote the participation of women in majors and professions traditionally viewed as male preserve.

**IR2.2 Reduced poverty through enhanced competitiveness that expands micro, small, and medium-sized enterprise growth.**

**Main Findings:**

- The share of women in the MSME sector in Lebanon is quite low, with figures ranging between 8% and 10%.
- While there is an increasing interest in supporting MSMEs within the donor community, and despite the abundance of business support services, most programs (including the Small and Medium Enterprises Unit within the Ministry of Economy and Trade) are gender blind and do not address women-specific constraints regarding enterprise development and expansion.
- The majority of civil society programs that do target women directly rely on micro finance services, based on a belief that linking informal entrepreneurs to formal banks necessarily leads to the formalization of their businesses - this is highly contested approach which has proven its failure in other countries.
- Current support programs advanced by local and international organizations tend to focus largely on women in micro enterprises and ignore small and middle income women-owning businesses with high growth potentials but limited operational knowledge or resources to advance.
- A complicated regulatory system, unnecessary administrative compliance requirements, and draconian discretionary bureaucratic powers adversely affect the competitiveness of SMEs and inhibit women from expanding their micro enterprises.
- Access to information and advisory services was identified in a recent survey of MSEs in Lebanon as a widespread constraint.

**Main Recommendations:**

- Support research studies and assessments of the specific needs of women across the MSMEs sector (not only in the micro enterprises as has been the practice) in the context of gender relations and social norms, to form the basis of future support programs and services.
- Collaborate with Financial Institutions and micro-credit organizations on the initiation of training programs focused on MSMEs to (a) provide them with targeted advice and (b) to build the technical capacities of men and women in the sector using gender sensitive tools. The objective of such programs should be to enhance market competitiveness and possibilities for expansion and growth of the participating MSMEs (especially female-owned), with attention to topics such as production technology; quality improvement; business planning and budgeting; innovative marketing strategies; new product development; bookkeeping and accounting; identification of

credit sources and development of applications; and relevant legal and tax issues (including business registration and navigating the bureaucratic red tape).

- Support the advocacy, networking, and lobbying skills of men and women in the MSMEs sector through training sessions and information sharing mechanisms.

### **IR2.3 Increased access to finance for micro, small and medium enterprises**

#### **Main Findings:**

- While many microcredit programs do specifically target women, very few of them are actively integrating gender issues into their services.
- Stringent credit requirements and demand for collaterals have kept traditional banking inaccessible to most MSMEs, especially those owned by women, leaving only 3% of bank loans going to female entrepreneurs.
- The very few bank loan programs that recently eliminated the property requirement for MSMEs come with inhibiting high interest rates.
- A recent loan program (KAFALAT) sponsored by the Lebanese government to increase access to finance for MSMEs has inherent limitations for female-headed businesses, whereas applicants are required to submit a business feasibility plan (a skill that many women entrepreneurs do not have) and to be registered formally as a condition for a loan application (a requirement that most women cannot meet with their small businesses operating mostly in the informal sector).
- Lebanon has 23 microfinance programs, including those administered by commercial banks with subsidized interest rates and others sponsored by international development organizations. But the sector is highly concentrated in the hands of three major players covering 94% of the total market.
- The majority of microfinance providers in Lebanon are structured as NGOs (with many providing funds on philanthropic rather development basis) and depend on grants from international entities, including USAID.
- Men and women are targeted by all microfinance providers, with some of them designing programs specifically for women entrepreneurs. Based on a recent survey, women borrowers of the six key programs in Lebanon represent 21% to 57% of their total clients.
- The microfinance sector is generally marked by lack of sensitivity to socio-cultural issues and gender power dynamics, which give men in the family an upper hand in decision making especially on financial matters such as applying for loans and managing funds.

- Microcredit remains the main product of microfinance programs in Lebanon, which are yet to move into the provision of other financial products, such as savings and insurance schemes, that could provide both male and female beneficiaries long term security, especially in a crisis-prone country such as Lebanon.
- Most financial programs offer loan amounts that are too small to make a significant difference in the productivity of MSMEs.
- Microfinance programs tend to lack a comprehensive approach towards the development of the badly-needed technical skills of men and women owners of MSMEs.
- Outreach to female business owners is also undermined by the difficulties microfinance lenders in Lebanon serving the MSMEs sector face in recruiting female loan officers.

#### **Main Recommendations:**

- Sensitize USAID IPs responsible for microfinancing program on gender issues (through training and knowledge sharing).
- Build the coordination, networking, and lobbying capacities of MFIs and microfinancing NGOs through specialized training ultimately leading to the creation of a national microfinance network focused on gaining more government support to the sector.
- Build the technical capacities of microfinancing organizations through a well-devised gender sensitive training program to increase their outreach skills to female-headed enterprises.
- Undertake a gender assessment study of MFIs and microfinancing programs in Lebanon.
- Provide training to men and women entrepreneurs to build their technical skills on issues that would improve their abilities to access loans and manage them.
- Undertake market research and feasibility studies in support of the productivity of women entrepreneurs and to understand the needs of women-owned businesses.

#### **Conclusions and proposed actions related to the operations of USAID/Lebanon:**

- Interviewed USIAD staff generally indicated an open attitude concerning gender issues and gender mainstreaming. It was clear, however, that “gender” does not constitute an essential element in their work.

- None of the Mission staff have received gender-related training as part of their work for USAID, except for one who was informally designated by the Program Director as the Mission's "point of contact on gender." At the time of preparation of the present report, the "gender point of contact" did not have clear function or responsibilities in this capacity.
- Reporting from IPs on the activities of some of the projects generally entails the provision of data desegregated by sex. In addition, the bi-annual Performance Annual Plan requires the office as a whole to include information on gender as part of its progress of work. Despite such requirements, gender does not seem to be systematically mainstreamed throughout the program. The data provided by the IPs is often quantitative and does not allow for a qualitative understanding of the impact of USAID activities on gender equality and women's empowerment in Lebanon.
- There has been a recent minimal infusion of a gender element in the monitoring of USAID activities in Lebanon through the work of the LPMP project responsible for helping USAID/Lebanon carry out its performance monitoring and validation. The gender sensitive profile and experience of the project staff has been facilitating the introduction of a gender element in the implementation of other projects (including a recent inclusion of a gender orientation session in training workshop for all IPS of USAID/Lebanon).

### **Main Recommendations:**

- Establish clear accountability structure on gender issues for the whole USAID/Lebanon office as well as within each USAID project under implementation. Within the office, it is highly advisable to formalize the designation of a "Gender Focal Point" with clear function and responsibilities. The GFP should become a resource person for the Mission staff and the IPs on all matters related to gender issues, including the application of the USAID Gender Policy or gender mainstreaming and their integration into the overall program of USAID. The GFP should receive ongoing capacity building and updating of knowledge on tools and standards related to gender mainstreaming, to be transmitted systematically to the other Mission staff.
- It is highly advisable to support the role of the GFP with an earmarked office budget for gender to cover training, documentation, and participation in related events.
- Provide training for all Mission staff and IPs on "USAID Guide to Gender Integration and Analysis" and sensitize them on the principles of gender mainstreaming and female empowerment.
- Undertake systematic integration of gender mainstreaming in all stages of program planning, with clear gender sensitive indicators and Monitoring and Evaluation methodologies to be utilized by the IPs.

- At the level of IPs and partner organization, introduce gender-sensitive requirements for the selection of partners, implementation process, and reporting on results - all supported with clear tools and realistic expectations on gender mainstreaming.
- Establish links with a State Department program focused on the Lebanese Internal Security Force (ISF) that is currently under implementation by the US Embassy in Lebanon (but falls outside the responsibility of USAID) to bring a gender perspective into the work of the ISF, through the inclusion of training sessions on handling complaints about GBV, sexual harassment, violence against migrant domestic workers, and in its dealings with women prisoners and under custody.

## **ANNEX 5: THREE SELECTED SETS OF INTERVENTIONS PROPOSED FOR IMMEDIATE IMPLEMENTATION AS PART OF CURRENT PORTFOLIO OF USAID/LEBANON**

### **LIVCD and LIM (Economic Opportunity) supporting CDCS IR 2.2:**

Two of USAID/Lebanon current projects, the Industry Value Chain Development (LIVCD) and Lebanon Investment in Micro Finance (LIM), aim to enhance the development of small enterprises particularly in the rural economy. As such, they represent an excellent opportunity to serve the needs of female-headed businesses, including value chain enterprises. Two specific initiatives would be especially consistent with USAID's female empowerment objectives and at the same time are feasible to implement as a starting point within the parameters of the two existing projects: (1) Support the completion of studies and assessments of the specific needs of women across the MSMEs sector (not only in the micro enterprises as has been the practice) in the context of gender relations and social norms, to form the basis of future support programs and services; and (2) collaborate with Financial Institutions and micro-credit organizations focused on MSMEs to develop and implement training and capacity building workshops focused on developing the technical capacities of men and women in the sector, using gender sensitive tools. The emphasis should be on the enhancement of market competitiveness and possibilities for expansion, covering topics such as: production technology; quality improvement; business planning and budgeting; innovative marketing strategies; new product development; bookkeeping and accounting; identification of credit sources and development of loan applications; and relevant legal and tax issues (including business registration and navigating the bureaucratic red tape).

#### Proposed indicators:

- Number of surveys and need assessment studies focused on women in the MSMEs sector using USG assistance.
- Number of female-headed MSMEs receiving USG assistance in the areas of technical training, development of business plans, and access to finance.
- Number of men and women in financial institutions participating in training programs using USG assistance.
- Number of women-led Micro and Small Enterprises expanding into new markets using USG assistance.
- Number of enterprises transforming from micro to small to medium size using USG assistance (broken down by sex of the entrepreneur).

### **D-RASATI and USAP (basic education) supporting CDCS IR1.1:**

Current USAID project on “Developing Rehabilitation Assistance to Schools and Teacher Improvement” (D-RASATI) provides possibilities for gender mainstreaming by (1) undertaking research on causes of dropout and repetition among girls and boys in schools receiving USG support and organizing gender sensitive capacity building activities for teachers to deal with this problem; and (2) supporting research to identify the number (by sex) of school aged children with special needs in

Lebanon, their gender specific educational and social needs, and lessons learned from actual integration programs in the country (if any) and elsewhere. Parallel to these initiatives, USAID/Lebanon could consider extending the scope of USAP (which provides merit based-scholarships to public school students to attend higher quality American educational institutions in the country) to include female students from the public VTE sector as well, with emphasis on female students pursuing male-dominated specialization. Dissemination of information on such scholarships through the media (e.g. TV interviews with female beneficiaries) would be especially helpful to change attitudes towards VTE and women's entry into fields traditionally considered men's domains.

Proposed indicators:

- Change in enrollment / dropout / failure / repetition / rates among students in schools that received USG assistance, disaggregated by sex, age, and rural and urban status.
- Number and type of qualitative studies on causes of repetition, failure, and/or dropout among boys and girls in schools receiving USG.
- Number of teachers (by sex and age) in training organized with USG assistance.
- Change in the knowledge and attitude of trained teachers (disaggregated by sex and geographic location) towards gender roles and towards majoring choices of girls versus boys. (through tools such as a KAP study)
- Number and type of gender sensitive research on children with special needs in schools receiving USG assistance.
- Number (%) of students with special needs (by sex, age, and rural and urban status) integrated in schools receiving USG assistance.
- Change in the profile of beneficiaries of USG scholarships (disaggregated by sex, institution, and field of study).
- Number of media outreach programs advocating entry of women in male-dominated fields and highlighting the benefits of VTE education.

**PACE (Civil Society) supporting CDCS IR1.4:**

USAID/Lebanon is already engaged in various initiatives that target the sustainability and effectiveness of Lebanese CSOs, specifically through its civil society program "Promoting Active Citizen Engagement in Lebanon" (PACE)." PACE's focus on enhancing the potentials of civil society actors provides an excellent opportunity to bring the issue of female empowerment closer to the core of civil society agendas. To this end, gender issues can be infused into all planned activities (e.g. training, campaigns, etc.) to reflect the concerns of both men and women. Engaging women's machinery (especially NCLW and the ministerial GFPs) and relevant UN agencies and NGOs committed to gender equality in the design and implementation of program activities would enhance cooperation and allow the integration of women's issues into the broader agenda of CSOs. Given the significant role the media plays in influencing public opinion, awareness and knowledge building activities targeting media professionals (male and female) to sensitize them on the centrality of female empowerment to political and economic development would be especially important.

More specifically, it is recommended that the Mission use PACE as a platform to introduce a three-pronged "Gender Literacy" initiative that involves (1) training sessions to strengthen the technical capacities of CSOs in the areas of gender mainstreaming, gender assessment, and gender programming



*regardless of their mandate* and open to *all* their staff; (2) substantive and evidence-based research on women and gender relations in Lebanon, especially on topics with linkages between gender empowerment and other priority issues in the country (e.g. good governance, poverty, transparency, political participation, human rights, etc.); and (3) financial support for CSOs and skill building in the areas of collaborative advocacy and outreach on issues related to women's rights and empowerment, especially GBV, sexual harassment, and women's economic and legal rights.

Proposed indicators:

- Number of CSOs participating in gender related training organized with USG assistance.
- Number of CSO personnel in gender-related training workshops organized with USG assistance (by age, sex, and organizational duties).
- Number of gender related standards and tools adopted in CSOs receiving USG assistance.
- Number of completed / published / cited studies on gender completed with USG assistance.
- Impact of gender-focused campaigns completed with USG assistance measured by public surveys and user feedback assessing perception of intended message.
- Number of media channels used in gender-related campaigns completed with USG assistance.
- Number of media coverage / references about CSO campaigns planned with USG assistance.
- Number and target of collaborative advocacy initiatives (by regional and thematic focus of participating CSOs) designed and completed with USG assistance.
- Change in level of knowledge on linkages between gender issues and national priorities among relevant stakeholders benefiting from USG assistance (measured by impact evaluation and participants' feedback).